The Story of Westminster Abbey

BY LAWRENCE E. TANNER
M.V.O., M.A., F.S.A.

THE NAVE LOOKING EASTWARDS
The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in foreground

THE STORY OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY

BY

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Keeper of Muniments, Westminster Abbey

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

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Note.—The Author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to all these books and more especially to those of the late Professor W. R. Lethaby. They and the 'Inventory' are the basis of all modern research on the architecture of the Abbey.

FOREWORD

by

THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

THOSE who know the great Minster at York may have had—as I have had—the curious experience of entering it on a foggy winter's morning when all was dark outside, to find the interior flooded with sunlight. The phenomenon is due to the fact that the great windows of the Lantern Tower are sufficiently high to be free to bask in the sunshine which is obscured below by the fog. May we not say that it is the peculiar function of our great Cathedral Churches to stand thus serene through the centuries above the mists and turmoil of our daily life? So it has been at the Abbey in the past; so, let us hope, it will be in the future.

The story of Westminster Abbey can never be told too often. No other Cathedral or Abbey is so rich in historic memories and memorials of the past, and as my predecessor, Dean Robinson, has truly said 'no labour can be thrown away which helps to illustrate an institution so near to the heart of English life'. In the pages which follow the 'Story of Westminster Abbey'

is told by one who was born and bred beneath its walls, and who both as keeper of our records and from personal knowledge is able to speak with exceptional authority. It has been his aim to write what we may call, perhaps, a plain man's story of the Abbey, free from the technicalities of the expert and from the inevitable detail of the Guide Book, but embodying in his pages the results of the most recent research on this fascinating subject. If others are induced by what he has written to read more widely and study for themselves this great Abbey Church, I do not doubt that this little book will have fulfilled its purpose.

I am grateful for being allowed to have a little share in sending it forth.

W. Foxley Norris.

July, 1932. *Dean of Westminster.*

THE STORY
OF
WESTMINSTER ABBEY

PART I
THE STORY OF THE BUILDING OF THE ABBEY

CHAPTER I

THE ISLE OF THORNEY

IN the following pages we shall try to sketch the story of Westminster Abbey, to trace the successive stages in its building, to describe some of the treasures which it contains and some of the historic scenes which it has witnessed.

At the outset it is, perhaps, worth while to consider how it came about that the west Minster or Monastery came to be built in this particular spot, and why it has come to hold the unique place which it unquestionably does in the affections of British speaking races; how, in short, it has become known as "The Abbey" to thousands and thousands of people who feel an almost personal sense of interest in all that concerns it.

These questions are not easy to answer, because many factors have contributed to make the position of the Abbey unique. But if we consider the matter we shall find that two, at least, of these factors have been of outstanding importance, and that it is true to say that from them and from their relationship has sprung the whole subsequent development of the story of the Abbey. These factors are the River Thames and the Palace of Westminster, the one determining the site, the other the associations of the Abbey Church. The River, the Palace (now the Houses of Parliament) and the Abbey are the three things which have come down to us at Westminster from the most remote times, and their influence one upon the other has been constant.

Let us first of all take the River. Almost always by a great cathedral or abbey there will be found a river—Salisbury, Worcester, Gloucester, Durham, and so on—and the reason is obvious. In medieval times the rivers were the great highways. When vast tracts of England were forest or swamp, and roads and the carts upon them were of the most primitive kind, all heavy materials had to be brought by water. The stone for building the Abbey, for instance, was brought from Caen, from Beer on the coast of Devon and from the Isle of Purbeck, and was delivered to the wharves at Battersea and Vauxhall. Water, again, was necessary for drainage purposes, for the fresh fish on which the monks depended so largely, for bringing the grain to the granary, and "as a moat defensive to a house against the envy of less happier foes." For all these reasons, therefore, it was desirable to build an abbey in close proximity to a river.

But in determining the actual site for a great abbey local conditions had to be taken into consideration, and at Westminster there were circumstances which made this particular part of the Thames peculiarly suitable for such a choice.

Far away among the Hampstead Hills there rose a little stream, the Tye burn, which gradually found its way southwards. Marylebone (The Church of St. Mary on the Bourne) marks its course, thence it crossed Oxford Street at the Marble Arch, where stood the famous Tyburn Tree. By way of Brook Street,[1] Conduit Street, Hay Hill ("T'aye Hill") it meandered, and crossing Piccadilly where the dip in the road marks the course of the stream, it flowed across the Green Park and thence into the lake of St. James's Park (where it can still be seen in the two pipes which cross the lake from West to East). Then it divided into two. One branch flowed along Storey's Gate and Great George Street and joined the Thames just by Westminster Bridge. The other turned South, flowed down Prince's Street (The Long Ditch) and crossed Victoria Street where it broadens into the Sanctuary. It then flowed down Great Smith Street and turning East under the modern Church House found its way along Great College Street[2] and so into the Thames by the Victoria Tower. The island thus formed was called Thorney, and it was on this island that the Abbey of Westminster was ultimately built. But at this point we must pause for a moment to say a word about the earlier history of Thorney,

[1] Some years ago the traces of a stone pier were found on the site of Claridge's Hotel. The iron rings for tying up the boats still remained.

[2] In 1903 the remains of a bridge which crossed the stream at the west end of Great College Street were found a few feet below the street level.

for it introduces us to yet another factor which had its influence in the development of our story. This factor again connects us with water, but this time with the sea. A branch of the Roman road which passed through Canterbury on its way from the coast to London seems to have crossed the Thames by a ford at Westminster and proceeded in a straight line along the North Front of the existing Abbey (the pathway between St. Margaret's and the Abbey marks its course), until it reached the marshes by Buckingham Palace. There it turned North, and went on its way until it finally reached Carlisle. The Isle of Thorney was therefore an important strategic point, and there is no doubt that there was a Roman settlement upon it. From time to time many Roman tiles have been dug up, and in 1869 a fine Roman sarcophagus was found in the Churchyard to the North of the Abbey.

The Romans passed, but the island was not to remain uninhabited. At some unknown date a little band of monks established themselves there and built the earliest Westminster Abbey. In later days when Westminster was a great and famous abbey the monks delighted to tell the charming legend of its miraculous consecration. The legend tells how the founder of this church was Sebert, King of the East Saxons (*d.* 616) and how on the night before the consecration a stranger had hailed a poor fisherman who was casting his nets in the Thames and had asked to be ferried across to the island. And lo! when he had landed the new church was suddenly lit up from within and sounds as of an angel choir reached the astonished fisherman. Returning, the stranger revealed himself as St. Peter, bade the fisherman cast his net and take the

salmon which he would find therein to the King on the morrow and tell him that he would find the marks in the church of a consecration. And so it all came to pass, and for many centuries after in memory thereof the fishermen of Westminster brought a salmon on St. Peter's Day to offer at the high altar of the Abbey and were entertained by the brethren in the refectory.

The story is a charming one, and at least it suggests the early association of royalty with the Abbey. That association was to be confirmed when Edward the Confessor built a Palace on the Island just outside the walls of the Abbey. Thus there comes into the story another great factor which was permanently to influence the whole subsequent history of the Abbey. For the Palace was to become the favourite residence of the sovereigns of England until Tudor times. Within the Abbey Church they received their crowns and within its walls, too, many of them were laid to rest round the shrine of Edward the Confessor. From the Palace, too, were to evolve the Parliament of England, the administration of the law, and the great departments of state.

When the monastery was dissolved in 1540, and Whitehall took the place of Westminster as a royal residence, it seemed as if the connection of centuries might be broken. But new links were forged to the old. The Palace became the permanent home of the Houses of Parliament, and, for many centuries, of the law as well, while the great departments of state tended to group themselves along the way which led from the old Palace to the new.

The Abbey, too, witnessed a new development. After the Dissolution the Church ceased to be merely the Abbey

Church of a great monastery, and although it did not cease to be the Coronation Church and the place where sovereigns and their favourites were buried, it became, also, a national possession. The places where the pre-reformation altars had stood gradually came to be filled with the stately tombs of Elizabethan and Jacobean worthies. Dean Stanley has traced the stages of this development, and has shown "how out of the graves of the courtiers were developed the graves of the heroes; how Chatham became the centre of the Statesmen, Chaucer of the Poets, Purcell of the Musicians, Casaubon of the Scholars, Newton of the men of Science and so on." At first there was little distinction made between those who wished to be buried within the Abbey and those whom the nation desired should receive the honour of burial within its walls. Admiral Blake, indeed, was the first to receive a public funeral in 1657, but—throughout the succeeding century—burial within the Abbey was as much a question of fees as of fame. The result has been to crowd—overcrowd—the Abbey with monuments, yet it is worth remembering that these monuments bind the Abbey in a peculiar sense to every county in England. But the Abbey is neither a museum nor a mausoleum. Services of praise and thanksgiving have never ceased to be offered in it from the remotest times, and year by year it ever adds to the countless associations which have endeared it and continue to endear it to English-speaking races throughout the world.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH OF THE CONFESSOR

IN the last chapter we saw how it was that a church came to be built on the Isle of Thorney. Of the appearance of this earliest church—the church which was known to St. Dunstan and the Saxon kings—we know absolutely nothing. No trace has ever been found of it. There is, however, a shadowy tradition that it stood to the west of the present Western Towers somewhere about the site where now stands the column which commemorates those Westminster boys who fell in the Crimean War and in the Indian Mutiny. We know that it was enriched by King Offa, for the earliest authentic charter which we have is a grant to the monastery by that King (*c.* 785) of lands at Aldenham, and later again it was enriched by King Edgar, who gave us some remarkable relics, including some of the stones with which St. Stephen was stoned, some bones of the Holy Innocents and a tooth of one of the Magi.

Then the mists descend again until the time of Edward the Confessor. He determined to rebuild the church and monastery at Westminster, and the progress of the work became the absorbing interest of the last few years of his reign.

To him, therefore, we owe the second great Abbey Church at Westminster. But of this church, too, like its predecessor, nothing now remains above ground. On

the other hand, we know a good deal about it, and as its influence on the existing church was profound, it is worth our while to study it a little more fully.

In the first place we have two rather incoherent contemporary descriptions of it. Incoherent because the writers were trying to describe something greater and more impressive than they had ever seen before, and found it difficult to express themselves clearly. From these accounts we can gather that the church had a central tower, a rounded east end, two short transepts and a choir west of the central crossing. This last feature was retained when Henry III came to build the existing church. It owed its preservation to the fact that Westminster is a Coronation Church and that in this central space the sovereigns are crowned. For the same reason Rheims also has the choir west of the central crossing.

In the second place certain foundations have been found from time to time. In 1866 Sir Gilbert Scott found the bases of pillars belonging to the Confessor's Church beneath the pavement in front of the High Altar. This discovery enabled him to work out the width between the bays and showed him that the centre line of the church was practically identical with that of the present Abbey. In 1910 Professor Lethaby opened the ground in the Confessor's Chapel and laid bare the foundations of the apse—thus giving the eastern termination of the church—beneath the existing shrine of the Confessor. Finally, in the autumn of 1930, while cutting a trench across the nave for a new heating pipe, an obstruction was encountered which proved to be the foundation of the Confessor's nave. These foundations were traced to a

THE NORMAN UNDERCROFT

point just within the existing West wall of the Abbey where the foundations of a Western Tower were disclosed, thus marking the western limit of the Confessor's church and showing us that the nave consisted of six double bays or twelve bays in all.[1]

Lastly, considerable remains of the monastic buildings still remain, although these were probably built after the death of the Confessor. Of these the most considerable are the range of buildings known as the Undercroft to the Dormitory (now the Abbey Museum) together with the Chapel of the Pyx which properly belongs to it, some windows in the dormitory above (now part of Westminster School), the ruins of St. Katharine's Chapel in the Infirmary in the Little Cloister, and the lower part of the Refectory wall, which on its north side is also the wall of the South Cloister. All these buildings show us that the monastic buildings of the Confessor's abbey were more or less on the same site as those of the later monastery.

If then we put all this evidence together we can say that Westminster was the first of the great Norman churches to be built in England and by far the largest church hitherto constructed in either England or Normandy. It must have been a great and noble church, which not merely influenced the subsequent rebuilding at Westminster, but showed the way and influenced the great age of church building in England which began with Lanfranc and continued throughout the next century. Canterbury, Durham, Ely, Peterborough, Norwich, Gloucester all owed something to this mighty church.

[1] The South transept at Ely (built at almost exactly the same date) with its alternate pillars and piers must have closely resembled the Westminster nave.

It is probable that the Confessor did not live to see the completion of his church. It may be that he was content to complete the choir, leaving to others the task of adding the nave; for the nave was the least important part of a monastic church. If this is so it would explain why in the well-known representation of the Confessor's funeral in the Bayeux needlework the church is shown without any Western towers, although we now know from recent excavations that they certainly existed. But, whether he completed the church or not, Edward the Confessor has always been the central figure in the story of Westminster Abbey. The weakness and futility of his reign were forgotten in the saintliness of his character. In medieval times the lives of saints played a part in ordinary life which it is difficult for us to realise. Every trade had its patron saint, and the medieval man at every moment of his life, whatever he was doing or whatever he was suffering, had always the name of an appropriate saint on his lips. It is not remarkable, therefore, that so peculiarly an English saint as the last of the Saxon Kings should have been held in special honour, and that men should have delighted to preserve the stories and legends which gathered about him. One of these is worth recalling, for it appears so often in the sculpture and glass of the Abbey. It chanced that while the King was on his way to the dedication of the Church of St. John, at Havering, a beggar approached him and asked for alms. The Confessor, however, had no money with him at the time, and after a moment drew from off his finger a ring "large, royal and beautiful" which he gave to the beggar. That night two pilgrims from Ludlow were benighted in the Holy Land. To

them appeared an old man who, on learning that they were Englishmen, "joyously like a clerk" led them safely to a city. There he revealed himself as St. John the Evangelist, and gave them back the Confessor's ring to return to the King. He bade them also give the King the reassuring message that within six months he would be in Paradise. And so in due course it came to pass, and it is because of this charming story that throughout medieval times the Confessor is always represented (as for instance in the Wilton Diptych) holding a ring in his hand.

CHAPTER III

THE RE-BUILDING OF THE CHOIR

FOR a hundred years or more the Confessor's Church remained practically untouched.

The thirteenth century, however, was to open a new chapter in the story of Westminster Abbey. In May, 1220, Henry III laid the foundation stone of a Lady Chapel at the east end of the Confessor's church. Two months later he was present at Canterbury when the body of Becket was taken from the crypt and placed in a new tomb which was destined to become the most famous shrine in England. The solemn ceremony cannot have failed to make a deep impression on the susceptible mind of the boy King. It was then, perhaps, that there first came to him the inspiration to rebuild the church at Westminster and to place in a worthy shrine the remains of Edward the Confessor, for whom he had had a profound

veneration from his earliest years. Certainly the general setting of the Canterbury shrine must have been in Henry's mind when, twenty years later, he determined to remove the body of the Confessor from the presbytery and place it in a shrine behind the high altar of the new church.

It is an astonishing fact that Henry should have decided to pull down the great Norman church which had been completed little more than a hundred years before. It is possible that certain structural defects had already shown themselves, and that this may be the explanation of a curious sentence in a Papal Bull of 1245 which speaks of the church as " consumed with excessive age." It is interesting, too, to note that recent excavations disclosed the fact that the westernmost pillars of the Norman nave had been strengthened at some early date as if there had been serious fears for the safety of the western towers.

If this was so it helps to explain Henry's decision. But no doubt he was chiefly influenced by the marvellous outburst of cathedral and church building which marks the first half of the thirteenth century in France. French " architects " (if we may use a later term) had solved the problem of bridging a wide space and had learnt to support the vaults with diagonal ribs. They had invented the pointed arch and the flying buttress, and they were working out these discoveries with a logic and audacity and with a perfection of proportion which has never been surpassed. It was a century when, as M. Mâle has pointed out, religious thought and religious art had reached, as it were, an equilibrium ; when a Cathedral could be an epitome of the then known world, and it was possible to put into

THE EASTERN ARM FROM THE MUNIMENT ROOM

it all that it was necessary for a man to know to attain salvation; when the "sweep" and "lift", if we may so term it, of the slender pillars reaching one after another to the lofty vaulting inevitably led not merely the eye but the mind to higher things; when every chapel, every doorway with its sculptured tympanum, and every statue had its definite meaning and message to those who had eyes to see; when nothing was superficial and everything had its place in a perfectly ordered scheme. To those accustomed to the superb but sombre and even stern magnificence of what we in England call "Norman" churches with their almost overwhelming sense of power, the vision of the newly-built and building Chartres, Bourges, Amiens and Rheims must have come as an almost unbelievable revelation. "For a time, at least, the populations were kindled to an almost boundless enthusiasm for these great buildings which appealed equally to religious faith and human pride."[1] Architects from all over Europe were studying them, soaking themselves in the new ideas, experimenting, seeking advice and it maybe borrowing craftsmen to help them with their own buildings.

It is not remarkable, therefore, that when, about 1240, Henry III conceived the astonishingly bold idea of pulling down the great Norman church of the Confessor, and of building in its place a new church which should be both nobler and more beautiful than its predecessor, he and his architects should have turned for inspiration first to the newly completed Salisbury—such is the ancient tradition—and then to Rheims, the Sainte Chapelle in Paris, and above all to Amiens.

[1] Coulton, *Art and the Reformation*, p. 10.

In 1245 a start was made by pulling down the Confessor's church as far west as the nave. Following the usual custom of medieval builders the new work was begun at the east end. By 1254 the whole of the existing church as far as the central crossing had been built, together with the transepts, the north front, the rose windows, part of the cloisters and the chapter house. Various small architectural details mark the progress of the work. The north transept, for instance, is probably a few years later than the south, and would have been delayed by the elaborate work on the north front. All this eastern part of the church is the work of Master Henry of Reyns, the King's master mason, who, as Professor Lethaby has pointed out, must be considered "the architect of the building in all its parts." After 1254 the work seems to have slackened for a few years. It is possible that Master Henry may have retired or died, for he was succeeded in 1254–5 in office by Master John of Gloucester. In 1260, however, the work began again, and by 1269 the existing choir and one bay beyond had been completed under the supervision of Master John of Gloucester and his successor, Master Robert of Beverley, and joined on to the Norman nave of the Confessor.

In much of this work the influence of Rheims and Amiens was predominant. The great height and narrowness, the form of the chevet, the apsidal chapels and the wall passages which run round them, the great north front and the glorious flying buttresses which take the whole weight of the Abbey are all essentially French in their design, and show that the architect must have studied exhaustively French sources. But Westminster is some-

THE CHOIR

Looking Eastwards

thing more than a mere copy ; everywhere it bears the mark of a supreme genius. As Professor Lethaby has said, "while admitting to the fullest degree study of French sources, all at Westminster seems to me so thoroughly re-thought and re-handled, that I have no doubt that the foreign conceptions passed through the mind of an English master." We may, indeed, go further and point out that there are certain entirely English features in the design of the Abbey. The size of the transepts, the polygonal form of the chapter house, the design of the triforium arcade and the technical detail of the vaulting are "definitely English,"[1] and cannot be paralleled in French cathedrals of this date. But the question whether French or English influences predominate is really of little importance. The result was to produce a building of exquisite beauty and proportion which "ever surprises us by its loveliness."

The new church was consecrated on the 13th October, 1269, and the body of the Confessor was translated from before the altar and placed in the magnificent gold and mosaic shrine which, though sadly defaced, still exists. In the same year the mosaic pavement brought from Rome by Abbot Ware was laid down in front of the high altar. In its first freshness it must have appeared "a sea of glass like unto crystal" before the altar and the shrine.

[1] *An Inventory of Westminster Abbey* (Royal Commission on Hist. Monuments) pp. 19–20.

CHAPTER IV

THE RE-BUILDING OF THE NAVE

WE have seen that Henry III was only able to complete the rebuilding of the east end, transepts and choir of the abbey church. It was obvious, therefore, that sooner or later the task of rebuilding the Norman nave would have to be undertaken. For a hundred years, however, it remained joined on somewhat incongruously to the new choir, and when at length it was pulled down the work of rebuilding was so slow that another hundred and fifty years were to pass before it was finally completed. And yet anyone to-day standing at the west end of the church and looking at it as a whole would find it difficult to believe that the whole church was not completed at the same time. For it is a curious and almost unique fact that the later builders were content to keep to the original plan and build the nave in the same style as that of the earlier work.

Three names are inseparably connected with the early stages of this rebuilding. Simon Langham, a former abbot and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury and a cardinal (*d.* 1376), who supplied part of the necessary funds during his life and left his immense fortune to the abbey at his death; Nicholas Litlyngton, his successor as abbot, and Henry Yevele, the king's mason and the greatest architect of his day. The mind that determined that the nave should be rebuilt was unquestionably

Langham's, but to Yevele must be given the inspiration to make the abbey one architectural whole by carrying on the original plan of Henry III.

In 1375 a start was made and masons were employed to begin to pull down the walls of the old nave. The next year Litlyngton was able to write to Langham that he had "laid the first stone on the first Monday in Lent [March 3] in honour of God and St. Peter and in the name of our most honoured lord (Langham)". From 1376 to 1403 the work progressed steadily. The profits from two of the abbey manors, Paddington and Hide (i.e. Hyde Park) were assigned to the work, stone was brought in great quantities from Caen, Reigate and Beer, and by 1403 the great marble pillars from Purbeck, which cost between £40 and £80 each, were in position.[1] The total amount spent in these years was something between £20,000 and £30,000 of our money. The deposition and death of Richard II, who had taken a deep personal interest in the work, and the death of Yevele the next year (1400) brought all this activity to an end. During the whole of the reign of Henry IV the work on the nave practically ceased.

Henry looked with no favour on Westminster, which had been so intimately connected with his unfortunate predecessor. But it has not, perhaps, been recognised that he seems to have made a deliberate attempt to associate Canterbury rather than Westminster with the new dynasty. At this very time the monks of Canterbury were also engaged in rebuilding the nave of their cathedral. In striking contrast to his neglect of Westminster, Henry

[1] During recent excavations it was possible to see the great circular foundations upon which these pillars rest. It must be remembered that there is no crypt at Westminster and that the abbey stands on the sand of the Isle of Thorney.

took a great interest in this work, and to it he was a liberal benefactor. He must have known, too, that the circle of royal tombs round the Confessor's shrine at Westminster was now almost complete, and this fact no doubt influenced him in deciding to follow the example of the Black Prince and be himself buried near the rival shrine of Becket at Canterbury. And yet after all, and in spite of this apparent attempt to substitute Canterbury for Westminster, by a strange irony it was to be his fate to die within our walls. On March 20th, 1413, he was praying at the shrine of the Confessor when he had a stroke. The terrified monks carried him to the Jerusalem Chamber and laid him before the fire. Reviving, he asked where he was, and when they told him "Jerusalem" he murmured that it had always been foretold that he would die in Jerusalem, and so passed away.

The night of Henry's death his successor is known to have spent with the abbey recluse in his cell attached to the infirmary. It is unfortunate that we do not know the recluse's name, but he was almost certainly one of the senior monks, and as such would have remembered the interest which Richard II took in Westminster and all the building activities of his reign. What passed we do not know. But no one at Westminster can have failed to draw the moral. Henry IV had been a usurper, he had omitted to carry on the sacred work of rebuilding the nave, his reign had been an unhappy one, and he had been smitten with what was generally supposed to be leprosy. Finally death had come to him while actually praying at the shrine of St. Edward within the church which he had so shamefully neglected.

It may well be that that very night the young Henry vowed to continue this work on the nave. It is, at any rate, certain that within a few months the builders were again busily employed. Henry assigned the yearly profits on certain taxes to the work and appointed Cardinal Beaufort and the famous Sir Richard Whityngton and others to supervise the financial side of the undertaking.

We need not follow the details of the progress of the building. Before Henry died the masons were at work on the clerestory, and the end seemed in sight. But once again the death of the sovereign meant the loss of royal help, and for nearly fifty years very little further work was done. Then in 1468 a revival came "and an impetus was given which carried it to its conclusion." First the great West window was undertaken, and this was followed by the vaulting. When Abbot Estney died in 1498 it was reckoned that he had spent almost £4,400 on the New Work, as it was called, and had finished the roof, the west end, the flying buttresses and the battlements. Above all, the vaulting had nearly been completed. But beautiful as this vaulting is, we must remember that it was conditioned by the voluntary restriction on the part of the builders to carry out the original thirteenth century plan. Otherwise we might have had at Westminster something as entrancing and beautiful as the vaulting of the nave at Norwich which was in course of construction at this very date. After a brief interval under Abbot Fascet (1498–1500) the work was completed by his successor, the last of the great abbots, John Islip. Although we do not know the exact date, it is probable that the last bay (that next the choir) was finished about 1505–06. The

fabric of the nave was then complete, and only glazing and the paving of the floor remained to be done. This proceeded in a leisurely manner, and it was not until 1528 that this work was finally completed, leaving only the western towers to be added.

CHAPTER V

THE BUILDING ACCOUNTS OF THE NAVE

AMONG the records of Westminster Abbey is an almost complete set of accounts connected with the building of the nave. From these accounts —the Novum Opus Rolls as they are called—it has been possible to trace in outline the progress of this great undertaking almost year by year.[1]

It may be not uninteresting to take one of the unpublished account Rolls and study it in detail, for to do so seems to bring one into real touch with the builders in a way which no mere narrative of facts and dates is able to do. These accounts follow a set form, so that we can take one almost at random. Here then is the account of John Estney, Warden of the New Work (i.e. the Nave) from Michaelmas, 1492, to Michaelmas, 1493.[2] It is written on a long parchment roll, and the ink is almost as fresh as the day it was written. First of all the warden entered his receipts. The Manors of Paddington, Hyde, Knightsbridge and Longdon (Worcestershire) brought in £59 13*s*.

[1] *The Nave of Westminster*, R. B. Rackham *Brit. Acad. Proc.* 1909.
[2] *W. A. Muniments* 23568.

THE NAVE
From the South Aisle

4*d*. Rents of various tenements in Tothill Street (including the "Sarsonshede," i.e. Saracen's Head), Kensington, Westbourne, Paddington and Knightsbridge amounted to some £40. Amongst the tenements in Knightsbridge it is interesting to find one "next the bridge, called the lazarcote." The Knights Bridge crossed the west bourne, and no doubt in earlier days this house had been used as a leperhouse. Under the heading of Oblations the warden entered 6*s*. 4*d*. from "the new pix," or collecting box, for what we should nowadays call the "Nave Restoration Fund." This small amount must have been disappointing, but at any rate it was better than the year before, when the total amount from this source only amounted to 2½*d*.! Finally each of the forty-three monks contributed 13*s*. 4*d*., and by giving up their annual harvest outing at Battersea they were able to devote the amount allowed for it—£5—to the work. The total receipts for the year amounted to £133 17*s*. 3½*d*.

The warden then entered his expenses for the year, and he began with a serious deficit of £543 11*s*. 1*d*. from the previous year. The principal items for the year are grouped under the general heading of Wages and Stipends, and amounted to £123 7*s*. 9*d*. They included the annual fee of £5 to the master mason, Robert Stowell, together with an allowance of £2 for a house and 13*s*. 4*d*. for a fur gown. The five working masons received £8 13*s*. 4*d*. each and robes as their wages for the year. Then follows the interesting entry "49 cartloads of stone from Reygate (Reigate)." This cost £4 3*s*. 4*d*. "at the quarry." Carriage to Faukeshall (Vauxhall) came to £5 7*s*. 0*d*.; the cost from thence to "le Mill" (i.e. by boat across the Thames

to the Mill which stood at the bottom of the present Great College Street) was 12*s.* 3*d.*, and finally from the mill to "the Church and (Masons) Lodge, 5*s.* 0½*d.*" We may also note that one of the masons, Edward Kentstone, was allowed a shilling for "going to the quarry for stone."

Various small expenses are then entered such as "for Gryndyng tools, 34*s.*"; "2 peyles, 2 Treyes, 1 shovel, 1 dish and 1 sieve 2*s.* 10*d.*"; "2 whelebaroughs 1*s.* 6*d.*"; "4 lb of candles for night work 4*d.*"; and payments for glewe, rasoyne (resin) and nails of all kinds.

At the date of this account (1492–3) the principal work of the year was concerned with the new west window and the lower part of the towers. We find, therefore, the chief carpenter, Richard Russell, busy "about the repairs to the great belwhele in the small bell-tower" (which seems to mean the north tower) and "in making a pentice above the new west window of the church" and in striking "lez scaffolds" there. For all this work much timber was brought from Hyde and Hendon to "le Tymberhawe" (i.e. the sawpits) at Westminster. We may note that in the next year or two the west window was finished and "le gabul end" above it, and that it is all this carpenter's work which Sir Christopher Wren was to describe in 1713 in these words: "The great west window is also too feeble, and the gable end of the roof over it is but weather boards painted."

However, we must finish our account, for the warden has yet to enter a few more items of a more general nature. The Prior of the monastery had to have his annual Christmas present of 3*s.* 4*d.* and the Vicar of Longdon also received 13*s.* 4*d.* Four of the brethren celebrated their

first mass, and that meant a little present to each of them of 1*s.* 11½d. for extras in the refectory. The warden himself was allowed 40*s.* for his "good and assiduous labour", and had to pay the usual audit fees. Finally he added up his total expenses and found that they came to £133 18*s.* 7¾*d.* as against receipts amounting to £133 17*s.* 3½*d.* He had a debit balance therefore of 1*s.* 4¼*d.* on the year, but owing to the heavy deficit of the year before (£543 11*s.* 1*d.*) the auditors were forced to add at the bottom of the Roll "Et sic excedit £543 12*s.* 5¼*d.*" and this sum is duly entered on the roll for the next year. By 1498, when Abbot Estney died, the deficit had risen to £600, but it is pleasant to find that Estney's successor, George Fascet, paid off the whole of this sum from his own purse, thereby making a donation of something like £12,000[1] of our money towards the building of the nave.

CHAPTER VI

HENRY VII'S CHAPEL

IN the meanwhile, whilst the nave was still building, another great work had been undertaken. In 1503 on "the twentie fourth daie of Januarie, a quarter of an houre afore three of the clocke at after noone of the same daie, the first stone of our ladie chapelle within the monasterie of Westminster was laid, by the hands of John Islip, abbot of the same monasterie, Sir Reginald Braie, knight of the garter . . . and diverse others."

[1] It is very difficult to give the modern equivalent of medieval sums of money. The figures in the text should perhaps be multiplied by at least twenty.

It is unfortunate that we know little of the causes which induced the King to undertake the work, and it is still more unfortunate that none of the accounts for the actual building seems to have been preserved. It would appear, however, that as Henry advanced in years he felt that some, at least, of his vast wealth should be devoted to building a chapel wherein, inasmuch as he was "a synfull creature in synne conceived, and in synne had lived," prayers might be said for his soul "perpetually for ever while the world shall endure" to the intent "that the auncient and gostely enemye, ner noon other evill or dampnable esprite, have no powar to invade me, ner with his terriblenesse to annoye me."[1]

At first he meant to obtain the canonization of his "Uncle of blissed memorie King Henry the VIth" and to remove "right shortely" his remains from Windsor to Westminster. But the adding of a new saint to the calendar proved to be rather a more expensive business than the King was prepared to undertake, and for some reason the removal of the King's remains also was never carried out. The chapel, therefore, became Henry's own. It is obvious that it was designed to have his own tomb (as he himself ordered) "in the midst of the same chapel, before the high Altar." The altar was to be raised on steps, and probably behind it, after the pattern of the Chantry Chapel of Henry V, was to be the tomb of Henry VI. But after Henry's death his directions were not carried out. We know that Henry VIII "misliked" his father's plan, and placed the tomb in its present position. It is possible that he did so because he intended himself to be buried in the "midst" of the chapel together with

[1] The quotations are from Henry's Will.

THE ENTRANCE TO HENRY VII'S CHAPEL
The "Scala Caeli"

Katharine of Arragon. In 1519 a contract was actually drawn up whereby Torrigiani covenanted to make a tomb for the King and Queen. The place for its erection is not mentioned, but it is more than likely that Westminster was intended. The King's waning affection for Katharine, however, put an end to any such scheme.

In order to build his chapel Henry VII pulled down the old Lady Chapel which had been built by Henry III, and in clearing the site the house once inhabited by Geoffrey Chaucer was also destroyed. In their place Henry built what Professor Lethaby has called "one of the most perfect buildings ever erected in England." Perfect, indeed, it must have appeared both within and without, and of almost unimaginable splendour in its first freshness to anyone privileged to see it in the few brief years between its completion about 1519 and the dissolution of the monastery in 1540. Let us try and imagine, for instance, how it must have appeared to the Emperor Charles V, who came to the Abbey during his visit to England in 1522. After having been shown the almost unbelievable splendours of the shrine of the Confessor he would have been conducted to the foot of the steps leading to the new chapel. Here there were probably gates, for although they have disappeared the traces of their existence remain. For this was no ordinary flight of steps. In 1504 Pope Julius II had granted the same indulgence to those who mounted them as had been granted to the church of the Scala Caeli at Rome and thereby, as the monks delighted to point out, "had even now come to pass" the promise given by St. Peter to a hermit at Worcester in the reign of Edward the Confessor that in this monastery of Westminster the

ladder of heaven (scala caeli) should be set up, "whence those who serve St. Peter there shall by him be admitted into Paradise."

Arrived at the top of the steps, the warden of the Lady Chapel would have swung open the great bronze plated doors for the Emperor to enter, and at once he must have felt himself surrounded by "the whole company of heaven." For above the beautiful carved stalls his eye would rest on the sculptured row of saints, then probably brightly painted and gilded, which surround the chapel, while above them, glowing from the great windows, saints and prophets, and all the "imagery of the story of the old and new law," mounted higher and ever higher even to the pure white of the exquisite tracery of the fan vaulting. Below, beyond the delicate Italian carving of the altar, would have been seen flashing in the sunlight the gilt bronze screen of the chantry chapel of the founder, Henry VII. This, or something like it, must have been the sight that greeted the Emperor.

It is probable that the architect of this wonderful chapel was Robert Vertue, one of the King's master masons, who at that time was employed in building St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

The windows were almost certainly the work of Barnard Flower, "the Kinge's Glasyer of England," who was also responsible for some, at least, of the windows of King's College Chapel, Cambridge. The King's College windows give us some idea of what must have been the appearance of the Westminster windows, but one figure only and a few badges and coats of arms have alone survived to suggest to us their former splendour.

The King's tomb was the work of an Italian, Pietro Torrigiani, who was also responsible for the beautiful tomb in the south aisle of the chapel of the King's mother, the Lady Margaret. In 1517 he contracted to make the altar for the chapel, but at the end of two years he had not even begun the work, and in June, 1519, he departed for Florence without the King's permission, and with no intention of returning to "those beasts of Englishmen" as he called them. He died in 1522, and it was not until 1526 that the well-known Florentine artist, Benedette da Rovezzano, was paid £33 15*s*. "for setting up Our Lady's Altar in Our Lady Chapel"[1] at Westminster. The altar itself was destroyed by the Cromwellians, but some fragments of the frieze were found by Dean Stanley in 1868 in the vault containing the coffin of Edward VI, and this, together with two square piers with Italian Renaissance work from the same altar found at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, have been incorporated in the present altar.

We have spoken much of the former glories of the Chapel, but the visitor to-day cannot fail to be struck by the beauty of its proportions and by the impression of lightness and charm which it gives. These early Tudor masons, working in the full tide of the Renaissance, seem to have recovered something of the gaiety of their thirteenth century forbears. In the so-called Perpendicular style and fan-vaulting something distinctively English had been evolved, and in such buildings as St. George's Chapel, Windsor, King's Chapel, Cambridge, and Henry VII's Chapel, at Westminster, the builders seem to have been working with a joyous confidence, delighting in their skill,

[1] *W. A. M.*, 30626.

showing, as it were, just what they could do if they tried. No one, perhaps, to-day would build the roof of Henry VII's Chapel as that roof is built. It could be done, of course, but no one would care to balance stone against stone in that particular way and complicate the bridging of a span of 34 feet by the introduction of the stone pendants which add so greatly to the beauty of the roof. But the Tudor masons took the risk, and were more than justified by producing what an Elizabethan visitor to the Abbey called "a fair sight of marvellous workmanship."

On entering the chapel the visitor is immediately attracted by the great bronze gates covered with the badges of the Tudors, and by the carved work of the stalls, with the vigorous and grotesque carvings of their misereres. Above the stalls now hang the banners of the Knights of the Bath, and they add a brilliant touch of colour which was once supplied by the windows. By the gates is the fifteenth century font, which formerly stood in the North transept and afterwards under the South tower in the baptistery. It was finally moved here, after being much restored, in 1871. The rows of sculptured images of saints above the stalls and in the side chapels remain almost complete, but they now show no trace of the gilding and colour which it is believed that they once possessed.

Edward VI lies beneath the modern altar. As Dean Stanley pointed out, it is one of the most curious paradoxes of history that the first Protestant Prince should have been buried there by his successor, the bitterest enemy of the Protestant cause, and that "the tomb under which he reposed should have been the altar built by Torrigiani for the chanting of masses which he himself had been the

HENRY VII'S CHAPEL AND TOMB

chief means of abolishing." That altar was destroyed by the Puritans, and thus "the only royal memorial destroyed by the Puritans [was] that of the only Puritan Prince who ever sate on the English throne."

Behind the altar is the bronze screen made by Thomas Ducheman surrounding the tomb of Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth of York, "an amazingly daring thought and a triumphant piece of skilled craftsmanship."[1] We should notice the delightful little figures with which it is adorned. The figures on the tomb itself are by Torrigiani, and that of Henry is probably the most authentic likeness of him which exists. They have recently been cleaned, and show something of their former splendour. At each corner of the tomb are winged angels supporting Henry's shield. They once held standards in their hands as well. Immediately beneath the table on which the effigies lie is a charming marble frieze of Italian Renaissance work with birds and foliage, while beneath, on each side of the tomb, are circular wreaths enclosing gilt bronze plaques carved with saints. Amongst them are St. Christopher and St. Michael. The latter holds a pair of scales in his hand in which are figures of souls. While he listens to the Virgin Mary by his side, who intercedes for the souls which he is weighing, the devil beneath his feet has surreptitiously extended a bony foot, and is trying to weight the balance which contains one of the souls. At the foot of the tomb there was formerly an altar. Round the tomb are the five radiating chapels. The easternmost, which was to have had the chantry chapel of Henry VI, is vacant, but beneath is the vault which held the remains of

[1] Lethaby. W.A.R. p. 161.

Oliver Cromwell and the other Parliamentarians until they were disinterred at the Restoration. We should note, too, in the north chapel the large tomb of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (*d.* 1628), the favourite of Charles I. It has lately been discovered that the figures of the Duke and his Duchess are by Le Sueur, who made the mounted statue of Charles I at Charing Cross. Near the Buckingham tomb is the early sixteenth century pulpit with good "linenfold" panelling, from which Cranmer is said to have preached to Edward VI.

At the present day the stalls on each side of the chapel form a continuous row to the chapels at the east end. But at first and until 1725 there was on each side an empty bay with a pierced stone screen and doors giving access to the side aisles of the chapel. These aisles were, therefore, in much closer relation to the main chapel than they are at present. In the southern lies buried the King's mother, the Lady Margaret Beaufort (*d.* 1511). The effigy on her tomb, by Torrigiani, Stanley thought to be "the most beautiful and venerable figure that the Abbey contains." It is a plain altar tomb of black marble and gilded bronze on which rests the effigy. It is evidently a careful portrait, and the beautiful modelling of the hands should be noted. The iron railing round the tomb was sold in 1823, but in 1914 it was found and restored to the Abbey through the National Art Collections Fund. It was originally erected at the cost of St. John's College, Cambridge (of which College, together with Christ's College, the Lady Margaret was the foundress), and was the work of Cornelius Symondson.

Next to the tomb of the Lady Margaret are the tombs of Mary Queen of Scots and of the Countess of Lennox,

the mother of Lord Darnley, whose kneeling figure, surmounted by the remains of a crown, may be seen on the side of the tomb. In the same aisle are buried in front of the altar without any monument Charles II, William III and Queen Mary, Queen Anne and Prince George of Denmark. In the vault beneath Mary Queen of Scots are buried Henry, Prince of Wales (the eldest son of James I), his sister Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, the "Winter Queen" and ancestress of the House of Hanover, Prince Rupert, and others, including the ten children of James II and the eighteen children of Queen Anne, none of whom survived infancy or childhood.

In the corresponding aisle on the north side of the chapel is buried Queen Mary Tudor, but no memorial was erected over her grave. Some fifty years later Queen Elizabeth was buried in the same vault, and James erected over it the great monument which fills the eastern part of this chapel. It is similar in design to that which he had erected over his own mother, Mary Queen of Scots. Dean Stanley has described the awe with which on opening this vault he saw the two coffins, that of Elizabeth actually resting on that of her sister Mary. "Partners of the same throne and grave," as the inscription on the monument puts it, "sleeping in the hope of resurrection." The sight was the more impressive from its contrast to the "confused and multitudinous decay" which had greeted his eyes on opening the vault in the opposite aisle, with its tragic evidence of the extinction of the infant progeny of the House of Stuart.

Beyond the tomb of Queen Elizabeth against the east wall is the "Innocents' Corner," containing the urn with

the bones of the little princes murdered in the Tower and two small tombs of the infant daughters of James I. The Princess Sophia, lying in her cradle, has always attracted the most attention, but her sister, the Princess Mary, is a pathetic little figure. Recently her face, which had become quite black, was cleaned, and she now appears with her original pink cheeks and blue eyes. She died at the age of two in 1607.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERY

WE have digressed somewhat from our main story, to which we must now return. Let us, however, very briefly recapitulate the main facts of this astonishing story of constant building—this deliberate attempt, to put it in another way, to realise a great ideal and to build a church which should be perfect in all its parts. We have seen that Henry III built the east end, transepts and choir from 1245 to 1269, and that the nave was begun in 1375. By 1506 it was structurally complete, but in one form or another work continued on it until about 1528. In the meanwhile the chapel of Henry VII had been begun about 1502 and was completed in 1519.

By the year 1530, therefore, we may say that the Abbey church was complete, and it is probable that no cathedral in the country, not even Canterbury nor York, could show such a wealth of magnificence. Ten years later the blow fell. On January 14th, 1540, the Abbot and twenty-six monks

THE TOMB OF THE PRINCESS SOPHIA (*d.* 1606)
Daughter of King James I

met in the chapter house for the last time and sealed "unanimously and of their own free will" the document which delivered into the hands of "our most excellent Lord, Henry VIII" the Abbey church and monastery and all its possessions. Within a few months every treasure of the Abbey that was removable was scattered to the four winds. The shrine of St. Edward, however, was suffered to remain, perhaps because he was a king as well as a saint, although it is probable that the body of the saint was removed and concealed for a few years. In December, 1540, Westminster became a city, and for the only time in its history the Abbey church became a Cathedral under a Bishop of Westminster. As far as the monks were concerned, the blow was softened by the fact that the Abbot became the first Dean, and the Prior and five of the monks became Prebendaries. Four others became Minor Canons, and the rest were pensioned off in various ways. We know very little of this period of our history. There are sad records of destruction, beautiful things were ruthlessly destroyed "by cause they be monymentes of Idolatre and supersticyon," but the often repeated story that the Lord Protector Somerset determined to pull down the church itself in order to provide stone for his new palace, Somerset House, cannot be substantiated. He did, indeed, make an attempt to obtain the lease of a large house in the precincts, but this was frustrated, and the grant to him of one or two of the Abbey's manors was sufficient to retain his favour.

In 1553 Queen Mary Tudor ascended the throne and there followed the curious episode of the re-establishment of Westminster as a Benedictine Abbey. Everything was

done that could be done to make the experiment a success. Four of the new monks had formerly been at Glastonbury, and the new Abbot, John Feckenham, was in many ways a remarkable man. It was not, however, until November, 1556, that the monks entered into possession, and "the lord abott with ys coventt whentt a prossessyon after the old fassyon in ther monkes wede (habits)." It is greatly to be regretted that again we know very little of this interesting revival. Fifty years later Sigebert Buckley, who was the last survivor of the monks under Feckenham, professed two novices and passed on to them all the privileges of the former monastery of Westminster. Thereby the continuity of the English Benedictines was preserved, but when he was asked "the way of living" at Westminster in his time all the old man could remember was that "they rose at midnight, ate flesh and sat in the refectory face to face on both sides of the table, four to every mess, as they do in the Inns of Court." Feckenham played a prominent part in Mary's reign. It is said that he obtained the release of the Princess Elizabeth from the Tower when she was supposed to be implicated in Wyatt's rebellion. He attended Lady Jane Grey on the scaffold, and reasoned publicly with Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer. At Westminster he restored as well as he could the Confessor's shrine, and he was destined to preach with a heavy heart at Mary's funeral. We catch two glimpses of him in the anxious days which followed. Among the muniments of the Abbey is a letter "scrybelyd in haste" from one of the Abbey officials saying that he was desired by the Abbot to write "with alle spede for he lokyth every daye for the house to be desolvyd." His fear was justified.

Shortly afterwards, according to tradition, the Abbot was planting trees in the precincts "when one that came by advised him to desist from his purpose, telling him that the Bill was just then passed for dissolving his monastery. To which the good old man replied that he resolved howsoever to go on with his work, being well assured that that church would always be kept for an encouragement and seat of learning." It may be that he had received a hint of the Queen's intentions at that mysterious interview he had with her when she is supposed to have offered him the Archbishopric of Canterbury. But however that may be, he refused all compromise, the monastery was dissolved and the next year the new College of St. Peter, Westminster, was founded, with a Dean at its head.

One thing alone survived all these changes at Westminster. The little Grammar School in the precincts which had emerged at the end of the fourteenth century and was under the supervision of the Abbey Almoner, had been reconstituted by Henry VIII and was now to form a definite part of the new College with a Head and Under Master and a nucleus of forty Queen's Scholars. The Queen, who prided herself on her learning, took the deepest personal interest in its welfare. She handed over to it some of the vacant monastic buildings, she connected it with the colleges of Christ Church, Oxford, and Trinity, Cambridge, and she induced many of the prominent people about her court to send their sons there. She is, therefore, rightly looked upon as the foundress of a school, which in the following centuries became the rival of Eton and Winchester, and from that date to the present day has

never failed to educate those who have become " profitable members of this Church and Nation."

There is little to record for the rest of the century. The new Dean and Prebendaries settled down to carry on the services in accordance with the new Prayer Book and to manage the extensive properties with which the College was endowed. In 1566 an attempt was made by Parliament to abolish the right of sanctuary for debt. The Bill, however, was thrown out, mainly owing to the eloquence of Dean Goodman, who was allowed to appear in person and plead on behalf of the sanctuary at Westminster. This right was one of the most jealously guarded of the Westminster privileges. It had been granted by Edward the Confessor, and the extent of the sanctuary is roughly indicated by the present Broad and Little Sanctuaries. Within these limits the fugitive from justice was safe provided he took an oath to abide quietly within them, to wear no weapon, to behave himself properly, and never to leave the Sanctuary by day or night unless he had made his peace with his adversaries. It was seldom that anyone, however powerful, ventured to brave the penalties of violating this immunity. The most famous person who took sanctuary at Westminster was Elizabeth Wydville, Queen of Edward IV, who came for protection during the Wars of the Roses, and while within the precincts gave birth to the future Edward V. There is no doubt that the right of sanctuary was liable to abuse, and that many used the sanctuary as a convenient base from which to commit crimes on their neighbours. It lingered on, however, until 1623, when it was finally abolished by Act of Parliament.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ABBEY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

IN an earlier chapter we have pointed out how the sixteenth century and to a still greater extent the succeeding centuries witnessed a new development in the story of the Abbey. From being pre-eminently the resting-place of kings and their favourites, the Abbey Church came to include within its walls famous Englishmen of every age and every walk in life. Perhaps nowhere else in the world is there so unbroken a series of monuments. As Dean Stanley has remarked, "every stage of sepulchral attitude is visible" in these monuments. "We trace here, as in a long procession, the gradual rising of the recumbent effigies: first to lean their heads on their elbows, then to kneel, then to sit, then to stand on their feet, then to gesticulate, then to ascend out of tomb, or sea, or ruins, as the case may be." The simple dignity of the medieval tombs—which found, perhaps, its last example in the tomb erected by Nicholas Brigham in 1556 in honour of Geoffrey Chaucer—gave place with startling abruptness to the towering but still dignified monuments of the Elizabethans. These in turn were gradually surrounded by an ever-growing number of white marble tablets and other memorials. Some of these have more merit, indeed, than is usually conceded to them, but many were fitted into their place only by a ruthless destruction of medieval work which no "clearing away of monu-

ments" (such as one often hears advocated) would ever replace.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, the Abbey Church must still have retained something of its ancient appearance. For fifty years, or more, little had happened to disturb the peace of the precincts. The Chapter was able to devote itself to domestic affairs. Some attempt was made to preserve the ritual of earlier days. The use of "copes and wafer cakes" was continued in spite of Parliamentary disapproval, and various regulations were drawn up to ensure that proper dignity should be observed in the services. On one point the Prebendaries were unanimous, and a Chapter Order solemnly lays it down that in no circumstances could ladies in yellow ruffs be admitted to the church. This desirable unanimity, however, was not to continue.

The advent of Laud as a Prebendary in 1621 brought an element of discord into the Chapter. His bitter rivalry with the Dean, John Williams, was ultimately to cause the latter's downfall. Williams was one of the last of the statesmen prelates, for he combined the office of Lord Keeper of the Great Seal with those of the Bishopric of Lincoln and Deanery of Westminster. Laud himself wrote in his journal "the undoing of his brother and colleague in dignity did so run in his mind that it never was out of his dreams," and in consequence, as Laud rose to power, Williams suffered continued persecution at his hands. It ended in his being deprived of his offices on trumped up charges and imprisoned in the Tower. Later, indeed, he was released and made Archbishop of York, but by that time the Civil War was about to break out. The rivalry

between Laud and Williams was unfortunate for Westminster, for Williams had proved an excellent Dean. He had fitted up with bookcases the charming Library in the East Cloister which remains as he left it, he gave the elaborate mantelpiece in the Jerusalem Chamber to commemorate the marriage of Charles I and Henrietta Maria, he was a benefactor to the school, he was careful to see that a "cheerful noise of sweet music" gave dignity to the services, and he had begun extensive and necessary repairs to the outside of the fabric.

The outbreak of the Civil War meant the completion of the work of destruction begun at the Dissolution. In 1643 a Committee was appointed to demolish "monuments of superstition and idolatry" in the Abbey Church. The result was the destruction of the superb glass in Henry VII's Chapel, together with Torrigiani's altar, and the defacing of the thirteenth century paintings on the Sedilia. At the same time the copes worn by the Dean and Prebendaries were sold and the College plate was melted down. It is a melancholy story. It is but fair to say, however, that when in 1645 the Dean and Prebendaries were driven out and the government of the church was placed in the hands of a Committee, they did their work carefully and conscientiously and with a sense of responsibility. During the Commonwealth period the leading Cromwellians came to reside in the precincts, and Bradshaw, who had presided at the trial of Charles I, was granted a lease of the Deanery. A small room in one of the towers, which could be reached by a winding stair from the Deanery, is known to this day as "Bradshaw's room" and is traditionally the place which he used as his study.

At the Restoration in 1660 the Dean and Prebendaries returned, and the bodies of Cromwell, Bradshaw and the other Parliamentarians were disinterred. Some of them, by a curious irony of history, were thrown into a pit in the churchyard "near the backdoor" of the house which Laud had occupied as a Prebendary.

CHAPTER IX

THE BUILDING OF THE TOWERS, ETC.

At the close of the seventeenth century it became obvious that the fabric of the church was in a highly dangerous state and that extensive repairs would have to be undertaken without delay. Indeed, as early as 1660 Samuel Pepys had been alarmed when "in the midst of the sermon some plaster fell from the top of the Abbey" and had "wished himself out." In 1698 Sir Christopher Wren was appointed Architect to the Abbey, and in the same year Parliament voted an annual grant from the proceeds of the duty on coal towards the necessary repairs. For the next forty years or so the restoration work was continued at the Abbey. Inside the church, Wren repaired the vaulting, painted the stonework in imitation of Sussex marble and gilded the ribs and bosses of the choir, and his work remains at the present day. It is interesting to note that at the east end over the Confessor's shrine he worked into the vaulting some of the stones from old St. Paul's. He also persuaded Queen Anne to give to the Abbey the white marble altar-piece which

THE TOMB OF HENRY III

From the Chapel of St. John the Baptist

had formerly stood in James II's Chapel at Whitehall, and had since been stored at Hampton Court. It was an elaborate classical composition of considerable size eminently suitable for St. Paul's, but quite unsuitable for the Abbey. But none the less it remained in the Abbey for over a hundred years. In 1821 it was removed and found its way through one of the Prebendaries to the church of Burnham, in Somerset, where portions of it still remain. As far as the outside of the Abbey was concerned it was practically entirely recased stone by stone by Wren and his successor Nicholas Hawksmoor. The work was done somewhat drastically, and Wren had no hesitation in removing such of the old figures as remained in the niches and other medieval work and re-using the stone as filling for the buttresses. At the same time the North Front was altered, the stonework of the Rose window renewed, and the Rose itself filled with new glass from the designs of Sir James Thornhill. The glass in the West Window belongs to about the same date and was also probably designed by Thornhill.

It is well known that Wren wished to add a central tower and spire to the Abbey, and the wooden model which he had made with this end in view is preserved in the Abbey Museum. About 1719–22 various designs were drawn by William Dickinson, the Assistant Abbey Surveyor, under Wren's supervision. Wren, however, died in 1723, and for a time nothing more was heard of the scheme. It may be that he had already decided that the lantern would not bear the added weight of a spire, although he was convinced that the addition of a spire had been contemplated by the original builders. In 1734, however,

it was decided to complete the Western Towers under the supervision of Wren's successor, Nicholas Hawksmoor, and his assistant, John James. It is quite clear from some letters that have been preserved in the Muniment Room that Hawksmoor's head was filled with ideas of spires and "Gothic cupolas," and that he would have liked thoroughly to "Gothicise" the outside of the Abbey. Wren was too great a man not to be ready "to agree with the original scheme of the architect, without any modern mixtures to shew my own inventions," but Hawksmoor had no such scruples. There exists a perfect nightmare of a drawing which is alleged to be by Hawksmoor, and shows what he would have done had he been allowed a free hand. However, perhaps fortunately for us, he died in 1736 and left the work on the Towers to be completed by his successor, John James. James had been working on the two Western Towers at Lincoln about 1730, and whether the design for the Abbey Towers be his or Hawksmoor's there can be little doubt that Lincoln supplied the inspiration with such "Gothic humours" (to use Wren's phrase) as seemed good to the eighteenth century architect. They were completed about 1745, and the Dean (Wilcocks) was so delighted with them that they are represented both in his portrait at the Deanery and upon his monument. Later ages have not shared his enthusiasm, but it may, perhaps, be remarked that those who know them best are not those who find most fault with them, although they cannot be blind to their architectural defects.

The hundred years (1750–1850) which followed the completion of the Towers are a dismal period in the story

of the Abbey. Those to whose charge the church was committed seem for the most part to have considered that the maintenance of the fabric and a due care for the contents of the Abbey Church was the least important part of their not overexacting duties. This was the period when the Abbey became filled with what Dean Stanley called "monumental stumbling blocks and stones of offence." In 1761 the Dean, Dr. Pearce, gave permission for the removal of the beautiful monument near the high altar to Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke (*d.* 1324) in order to allow the erection of Wolfe's towering monument in its place. He was only prevailed upon to revoke his permission by the urgent representations of Horace Walpole. The Dean had been told, wrote Walpole, that "Aylmer was a knight templar, a very wicked set of people, as his Lordship had heard, though he knew nothing of them. . . ." Subsequently the Dean wrote a dignified if somewhat ingenuous letter to Walpole saying that it had given him "some concern to find that what we thought ye monument of some unknown person is now known to be that of one distinguished for his honours and mention'd in English history." His Lordship, as Walpole rather unkindly remarks, could hardly be expected to know that even "the man who shows the tombs names it every day," and indeed that it was known to everyone but the Dean and Chapter.

In 1775 the beautiful medieval choir stalls which had survived unscathed until that date were removed and stalls with wrought iron pinnacles were put in their place. These remained until the present stalls were substituted in 1848.

But on the whole, and except for the irretrievable destruction of the medieval choir stalls, the Abbey suffered less than other cathedrals in this period, and such damage as was done was due more to carelessness and lack of adequate supervision than to the deliberate decisions of responsible persons. This comparative immunity was the more remarkable when we realize that from 1776 to 1813 James Wyatt was the architect in charge of the fabric. Wyatt, as his epitaph informs us, was "transcendently distinguished as an architect," and "his professional ability was the combined result of superior genius, science and energy." Of his energy, at any rate, there can be no doubt. Salisbury, Lichfield, Hereford, and other cathedrals bear tragic and ineffaceable witness to it. But at Westminster he confined himself mainly to remaking the outside of Henry VII's Chapel. He was assisted by a "Committee of Taste" to see that the ancient work was "correctly imitated." It is gratifying to find that after spending no less than £42,000 on this work it was considered that the imitation had been carried out "in a manner that confers distinguished honour on all the parties concerned."

A new era in the story of the Abbey opened with the appointment of (Sir) Gilbert Scott as architect in 1849. Scott was the first man to study the Abbey scientifically, and although it was perhaps inevitable that some of his work should reflect the artistic taste of his age, much of the restoration work which he did at Westminster was absolutely necessary for the preservation of the fabric. Unfortunately, in dealing with decayed stonework he preferred too often to substitute a careful copy rather than preserve the original. But none the less the Abbey owes much

to his enthusiasm and knowledge, and for many years he was working in conjunction with one whose love for the Abbey was even greater than his own. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley had been appointed Dean in 1864, and from the first he was charmed and fascinated by the pageantry and romance enshrined within the walls of the Abbey Church. His energy and enthusiasm communicated itself to all with whom he came in contact. When he came to Westminster the Abbey scarcely counted in the life of the nation. From the earliest days of his appointment Stanley had a vision of what might be. He saw that the Abbey, with its agelong traditions, might occupy a unique position, and the place which it has come to hold as the central church of the Empire is largely due to him and to the fostering care of those whose privilege it has been to guide its destinies during the last fifty years.

PART II

THE STORY OF THE TREASURES

CHAPTER X

THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS

IT will come, perhaps, as a surprise to many people to learn that there are no fewer than thirty-two sovereigns or their consorts buried within the walls of the Abbey. Seventeen of these have monuments erected to their

memory, but the rest have no memorial, and it is only within recent years that the names of some of them have been cut in the floor above the place where they rest. Even now the exact place of burial of three of them is unknown. Queen Edith, the wife of Edward the Confessor, and Queen Maud, the wife of Henry I, are believed to be buried either beneath the pavement in front of the high altar, or, according to an ancient tradition, on either side of the shrine of the Confessor. The burial place of Queen Anne, the wife of Richard III and daughter of the King-Maker, is unknown. It is only within the last few years that the tradition of her burial in the Abbey has been made certain by finding that the Sacrist entered on his account roll for 1484–5 that he had received £33 6*s*. 8*d*. in offerings at the funeral of "the Lady Anne formerly Queen" and had bought certain torches for "le herse" of the said queen.

It is further a remarkable fact that no monument has been erected to any sovereign in the Abbey since that of Queen Elizabeth. James I, Charles II, William III and Mary II, Anne and Prince George of Denmark, George II and Queen Caroline are commemorated only by their names on the floor.[1] It was, however, certainly intended to erect a monument to William III and Queen Mary, for designs for such a monument by Sir Christopher Wren exist in the library at All Souls, Oxford, and in the Bodleian. But for some reason the project was never carried out. King George II was the last sovereign to be buried in the Abbey, and from the date of his funeral in 1760

[1] There are however wax effigies of Charles II, William and Mary and Queen Anne.

THE SHRINE OF EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

until 1925, when the body of Queen Alexandra lay in state for one night before the altar, no royal funeral had taken place within the Abbey. We may indeed add one more queen to our list, for Queen Louise of France, the wife of Louis XVIII, died in exile in England in 1810 and was buried in the same vault with the Duc de Montpensier, the brother of King Louis Philippe of France. Her body was, however, removed to Sardinia the following year. She and " the winter Queen," Elizabeth of Bohemia, daughter of James I of England, are the only foreign sovereigns who have been buried within the Abbey.

Of the monuments to sovereigns which remain, the most important is that of Edward the Confessor. It occupies the centre of the chapel behind the high altar, and round it have gathered the tombs of later kings and queens. The present shrine dates from 1268 and is of Italian (Cosmati) workmanship. It has the unique interest of being the one great medieval shrine which has remained almost untouched. It is of Purbeck marble and was once covered with glass mosaic. The actual coffin rests above the ground and above the niches which form the sides of the shrine. These niches were intended to enable the sick to kneel underneath the coffin and thereby be cured from their ills. The original top of the shrine was of solid gold, but this disappeared at the dissolution of the monastery in 1540, and the existing wooden top was placed there about 1556. It must be remembered that the screen which now divides the chapel from the presbytery was only erected in the fifteenth century, and that up till that time anyone standing at the foot of the altar steps would have seen first, immediately in front, the great

mosaic pavement reflecting, as in a pool of water, the lights which hung from the vaulting, then the altar, and behind it the gold shrine glittering and blazing with its lights and ornamentation, while all around in a great semi-circle were the royal tombs, each with their own ever-burning candles. It must have been a marvellous and awe-inspiring sight.

As we have mentioned in an earlier chapter, the general arrangement of the shrine and its surroundings closely resembled the shrine of Becket at Canterbury. Part of the mosaic floor is indeed identical with that at Canterbury, and again as at Canterbury the part to the west of the shrine is much worn by the feet of the pilgrims, who stood or knelt there while the wonders of the shrine were explained to them. The step at the east end of the shrine, which is probably not in its original position, is deeply hollowed by the knees of countless pilgrims who have knelt thereon. It stood originally, perhaps, in front of the easternmost niche on the south side, for the inside of that niche has many little crosses scratched on the stone-work, and these may mark the end of a pilgrimage. On special days, such as the Feast of the Translation of the Confessor on October 13th, when a great fair was held in the precincts, and visitors were numerous, the principal relics would have been shown to those who combined business with piety. They were the phial containing the Holy Blood which had been sent to Henry III by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the imprint of the feet of Our Lord at His Ascension, the Girdle made by the Virgin Mary with her own hands, and the Ring of the Confessor. Beneath the cornice of the shrine at the west end there still exist two

removable blocks of marble opposite to each other, one on either side. Those who were specially privileged would have been allowed to remove these and pass some object belonging to them from one side to the other, and in doing so it would have touched the head of the coffin of the Confessor and thereby have acquired peculiar sanctity. How much the ordinary pilgrim was allowed to see it is difficult to say. The custom of pilgrimage was at its height in the fourteenth century, and the Sacrist's Accounts show that in the middle of that century the offerings of the pilgrims amounted to about £70 a year—a large sum for those days. Thenceforward the offerings steadily declined. The pilgrims entered by the door in the west aisle of the north transept—it is a curious fact that it is through this door that on November 11th the stream of modern pilgrims enters on its way to the grave of the Unknown Warrior—and were probably sorted into parties and taken round much as at the present day. Crossing the transept, they would enter the ambulatory through the iron gates, and were probably only allowed to see the shrine from that point except on special days. It was not only piety which brought pilgrims to Westminster, and the beautiful grille on the tomb of Queen Eleanor and the iron railings and screens and gates which guard the tombs and chapels in the ambulatory show us that it was necessary to take precautions and keep the pilgrims to a definite route.

The centre tomb on the north side of the shrine is that of Henry III (*d.* 1272). It is a noble altar tomb of Purbeck marble with a bronze effigy by Wm. Torel. It is enriched with Italian marble and mosaic work of the same date and workmanship as that on the Confessor's shrine. The

superb red porphyry slabs which form the sides of the tomb remain, but much of the mosaic which surrounded them has disappeared, and some of the smaller circular panels are restorations by Sir Gilbert Scott. On the ambulatory side the mosaic work has been picked out just as high as the arm of a man can reach, but above this point the tomb remains practically undamaged. In the base of the tomb towards the chapel are three recesses which formerly held relics, and the tiny niche in the pillar behind the King's head almost certainly held the crystal vase containing the Holy Blood.

The perfectly plain Purbeck marble tomb of Edward I (*d.* 1307), without decoration of any kind, contrasts with that of his father, Henry III, and with the exquisitely lovely tomb of his wife, Eleanor of Castile (*d.* 1290). Few queens have been more beloved. Everyone knows the story how she sucked the poison from her husband's wound, and, how, when she died, Edward caused twelve great stone crosses to be erected to commemorate the stages of her funeral from Nottinghamshire to Westminster. Three of these remain, at Geddington, Northampton and Waltham, but the most famous of all—Charing Cross—has been entirely rebuilt. The village of Charing was probably of Saxon origin, and the name is found long before the thirteenth century, but the charming and romantic derivation of the word from "la chère reine," however fanciful, at least shows the affection in which the queen was held. The gilt bronze effigy by William Torel is, perhaps, the loveliest thing in the Abbey, and looking at it it is not difficult to believe the words of a contemporary that in her "strife ever found a peacemaker, the oppressed pro-

THE TOMB OF QUEEN ELEANOR OF CASTILE

tection, and the distressed sympathy." On the ambulatory side of the tomb there are traces of a painting on the stonework by Walter of Durham, depicting a tomb with mourners, and the Virgin Mary, to whom a knight in armour is kneeling in prayer. The coat of arms showed that this must be Sir Otho de Grandison, and it has been suggested that Grandison, who went on a Crusade the year that Eleanor died, must have been instructed to make prayers for the Queen's soul at the Holy Places in Palestine. It is a curious link with the Crusades. The Queen's brother-in-law, Edmund Crouchback, titular King of Sicily and Earl of Lancaster (*d.* 1296) has a noble tomb next the high altar on the presbytery side. He, also, was a Crusader and derived his name Crouchback (or crossed back) not from any physical deformity, but from his exploits in the Holy Land. He was the founder of the House of Lancaster. Recent cleaning has brought out much of the former colour on this tomb, perhaps "the most splendid medieval tomb in England" (Lethaby), and disclosed the fact that the little figure of Crouchback on horseback in the canopy was brightly painted and showed him with pink cheeks and blue eyes. Next to him is his cousin, Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke (*d.* 1324), and beyond again is Crouchback's wife, Aveline (*d.* 1273), the heiress of the Albemarle and De Redvers families. All these tombs were probably made by Alexander of Abingdon, "le Imagour," and were almost certainly painted by Walter of Durham, the King's painter. On the opposite side of the presbytery is the unfinished tomb of Anne of Cleves.

We must return, however, to the Confessor's Chapel. By 1300 the north side of this chapel was filled with tombs,

and it is probable that the fine tomb of John of Eltham (*d.*1337), Edward II's second son, was moved to its present position in St. Edmund's Chapel to make room for the tomb of his brother, Edward III. (*d* 1377), which occupies the centre of the south side. The marble work of the tomb was made by Henry Yevele, who designed the nave of the Abbey. The face of the gilt bronze effigy with its "long silky beard, refined statuesque nose and smooth but rather feminine brow" is traditionally supposed to have been taken from a mould after death. Among the "wax effigies" at the Abbey is a wooden figure which is supposed to have been the effigy of the King carried at his funeral. The face, though now beardless, bears a strong resemblance to that of the effigy on the tomb. The six small gilt bronze figures of his children form the most interesting part of the tomb. These are on the ambulatory side of the tomb and are evidently intended as portraits. They include the Black Prince (with a beard), Edmund Langley, Duke of York, and Lionel, Duke of Clarence.

Next to Edward III, to the east, is his Queen, Philippa of Hainault (*d.* 1369). The tomb has been sadly mutilated, but was once one of the most magnificent which the Abbey possessed, and of the seventy figures with which it was once enriched two alone remain. Froissart describes her as "the moost gentyll, moost lyberall, moost courtesse that ever was queene in her dayes," and she lives in history by her intercession for the burghers of Calais and as the foundress of Queen's College, Oxford. Between Edward III and the altar screen is the large tomb of Richard II (*d.* 1399) and Anne of Bohemia. She died in 1394, and

THE TOMB OF EDWARD III

the tomb was designed by Henry Yevele and made under the King's personal direction. The gilt bronze effigies of the King and Queen, who were formerly hand in hand, may be taken, therefore, as authentic likenesses. The King has a small forked beard, but the whole expression of the face is curiously weak, and far less pleasing than that in the portrait of him as a younger man—the earliest known painted portrait of an English King—which hangs by the high altar. When Dean Stanley opened the tomb in 1871, he found that the bones had been greatly disturbed, but he could find no mark of a blow on the King's skull, and there seems, therefore, no reason to doubt the story that the unfortunate king was really starved to death at Pontefract.

The circle of royal tombs round the shrine was now almost complete, and Henry IV was buried, as we have seen, at Canterbury. Henry V, however, was determined to be buried in the Abbey, and with the help of his "architect," John of Thirske, he planned a chantry chapel and tomb at the east end of the shrine. It consists of a raised platform on which stands the monument with a chantry chapel above forming a kind of bridge over the ambulatory. The King's effigy was formerly plated with silver and had a solid silver head. Shortly after the Dissolution the tomb was robbed of its silver, and now only a headless wooden effigy remains. The chantry chapel above is, however, but little injured. It was used not only as a chapel but as a watching loft for the treasures of the shrine and as a depository for relics. On the beam above hang the shield, helmet and saddle of Henry V which were carried at his funeral. Beneath the altar is now

buried Henry's Queen, Katharine of Valois (*d.* 1437). She was formerly buried in the old Lady Chapel.

It had been Henry VI's intention also to be buried at Westminster, and on more than one occasion he came to the Abbey to choose a place of burial for himself. By a fortunate chance there has been preserved among the Abbey records a document which gives an interesting description of one of his visits. It tells how the King came to the Abbey at night and said to the Abbot, "Is it not fittyng that I shoulde have a place to be buryed in here nyghe to Seint Edward where my fader and all my auncetors beth buryed?" The Abbot suggested that "it was metely for hym to lie in the chapell by his fader kyng Henry the Vth." But the King replied, "Nay, let hym alone, he lieth lyke a nobyll prince; I wolle not troble hym." Others suggested that Queen Eleanor's tomb might be removed. "Whereunto the seid kyng . . . shewed his mynde and saide that it myght not well be in that place." Various other suggestions were made, and eventually the King pointed with his staff to the relic chest which then stood to the north of the shrine and said, "Here me thynketh is a convenient place." The Abbot immediately agreed to have the chest moved, and the King having said, "Forsothe here woll we lye," forthwith, "with his owne feete mett out the lengith of vij foote befoore and nyghe the place wher the Reliques than stoode and commawndyd a mason than beying present callyd Thurske . . . to marke oute there the place . . . withe an iron pykkes. Which done, the seid kyng Henry seid to such as then there were present these wordes, 'Forsoth and forsoth here is a good place for us.'"

But in spite of his wishes the "murdered saint" was to be buried, not at Westminster but at Windsor, and his only memorial at the Abbey is the long, wavering scratch of Thirske's pickaxe on the stone floor, which was seen and identified by the late Mr. Westlake and myself nearly 450 years after this interesting story.

The later kings and queens were buried, as we have mentioned, in Henry VII's new chapel.

CHAPTER XI

THE SCULPTURES

WESTMINSTER ABBEY can show no wealth of sculpture on its outside comparable to the West Fronts of Wells, Lichfield or Peterborough. London atmosphere and successive "restorations" have destroyed the figures, and only empty niches or modern copies of ancient figures remain. It was not always so. Although the West Front, as we have seen, remained uncompleted until the end of medieval times, the North Front was the principal façade of Henry III's church and the North Transept with its great portals, its "rose" window, its flying buttresses and its sculptured figures must have been a thing of incomparable beauty. It was based on those of Amiens and Rheims, and it is probable that the central porch was devoted to the Last Judgment[1], and that all around were sculptured Apostles, Prophets, etc., on a regular plan. We know that somewhere at this entrance there were

[1] Lethaby W. A. R., p. 68, *et seq.*

greatly venerated statues of the Virgin and St. Peter, and from the analogy of Amiens it is possible that the right and left porches respectively were specially devoted to their honour. But unfortunately this noble entrance has twice been ruthlessly restored, first by Sir Christopher Wren and later by Mr. Pearson in 1890.

Inside the Abbey there remain some of the most beautiful sculptured figures in England. Of these the best known are the "Censing Angels," and the figures which accompany them high up under the great Rose Windows. Those under the South Rose have recently been cleaned (*not* restored) and now for the first time their incomparable beauty can be seen even from the floor of the church. The group consists of four separate figures. The two central ones are now much worn and one of them has lost his head, but they were evidently carved with great skill and care. They are something of a puzzle, for it is not definitely known whom they represent, but it seems probable that they are the Confessor and the Pilgrim (St. John). But the figures on either side of them of the two angels swinging their censers are carved in different stone, and are much better preserved. They are incomparably lovely, and perfect in their poise and balance. The recent cleaning has revealed the fact that originally they were brightly coloured and that even the pupils of the eyes have been painted. The companion Angels in the North Transept have not yet been cleaned (1932) and the two central figures between them have disappeared. These angels are perhaps by a different hand, and though very charming seem perhaps just to miss the matchless grace of their companions of the South Transept. These Censing Angels have long been

THE CENSING ANGEL
South Transept

known to be the loveliest things in the Abbey, and Professor Lethaby has suggested not only that they may be assigned to Master John of St. Albans, "sculptor of the King's images" (*c.* 1257) and his school of assistants, but that it is possible that the well-known "Angel Choir" at Lincoln may also be from the same school of sculptors.[1]

Of almost equal beauty is the Annunciation Group consisting of the Virgin on one side and the Angel on the other of the inner doorway to the Chapter House. These figures are nearly 6 ft. high, and were discovered by Sir Gilbert Scott when he restored the Chapter House in 1866. They were then hidden behind the panelling which had concealed them for centuries. The Virgin carries "a book of the prophecies and she lifts her right hand in surprise while the Angel expounds what was written."[2] There is little doubt that these figures, too, are derived from similar figures at Amiens Cathedral. These figures, together with the Censing Angels form a group of thirteenth century sculpture which can hardly be surpassed in England. They have that beautiful serenity which is the distinguishing feature of a century when thought and art went hand in hand. As a distinguished French antiquary has pointed out: "What one reads on the face of these statues is neither suffering, nor anguish, nor torment, but profound peace, repose and silent adoration."[3]

Of less importance but of great beauty are a series of thirteenth century sculptured heads in the Triforium. They are carved with great vigour but with great restraint. Two are of supreme beauty, one of them, of a young man,

[1] W. A. R. Ex., p. 184, 188. [2] Ibid p. 116.
[3] *Emile Mâle.*

reminding us of a Greek head in its serenity and thoughtfulness—one would like to think it a portrait of the master mason who conceived and built the Abbey Church. Near by is an amusing and vigorous caricature of a working mason. There are many other small sculptured heads and figures scattered about the Abbey which will well repay careful study.

The fine series of sculptured and painted stone shields in the choir aisles are contemporary with the building of the church. They bear the arms of those who are traditionally supposed to have been benefactors of the church. The shields must certainly date before 1264, for among those on the north side is the lion rampant of Simon de Montfort, and this would not have been placed there after he had broken into open revolt in that year.

We must mention two other considerable groups of later sculpture. The Chantry Chapel of Henry V was completed about 1442 by the King's master mason, John Thirske. It was ingeniously contrived to fill the east end of the Confessor's Chapel and to form a kind of bridge over the ambulatory below. The Chantry Chapel is entirely covered with sculptured figures. The sides of the " bridge" towards the ambulatory are filled with delightful little figures representing judges and peers in their Parliamentary robes, each about 18 inches high and each in its own canopied niche. They are in relation to the two central groups on either side representing the Coronation of Henry V—perhaps the most authentic portrait of Henry which we possess. Near by on either side of the " bridge " is a vigorous representation of Henry V in full armour and wearing a tabard, mounted on a galloping and richly

THE CHOIR AND NAVE LOOKING WESTWARDS

From King Henry V's Chantry Chapel

caparisoned charger. In the Upper Chapel the sculpture of the reredos consisted of seven life-size statues, but the centre one is now missing. The outside figures represent St. George and St. Denis (carrying his own head) the patron saints of England and France. It is perhaps the only place in England where they appear together and thus commemorate the fact that by the Treaty of Troyes Henry V was recognized as the heir to the crown of France. Next to them are Edward the Confessor and Edmund, King and Martyr, while the three central figures formed an Annunciation group. The statues round the turret staircases represent the founders of the Abbey, together with bishops, abbots and other figures.

To John Thirske, the builder of the chantry, may also be assigned the altar screen which divides the Presbytery from the Confessor's Chapel. The west side, which forms the back of the high altar, has been entirely redesigned by Sir Gilbert Scott, but the other side, towards the shrine, although sadly mutilated, still has a frieze of sculptures depicting incidents in the life of the Confessor, and these are fairly well preserved. The whole screen was once elaborately painted, and traces of colour remain. It was completed in 1440-41[1].

Lastly, there is the wonderful collection of sculptured figures which enrich the inside of Henry VII's Chapel. Art in the fifteenth century had tended to become stereotyped and conventional, but these figures—and there are nearly a hundred of them—carved in the early years of the sixteenth century are full of dignity and renewed vigour. The principal series are ranged all round the chapel at

[1] *W. A. M.* 196923

the Triforium level and represent Christ in the centre at the east end surrounded by the Apostles, Patriarchs, Philosophers and Saints. At a lower level in the side chapels and aisles are rather larger figures also representing saints. They will all repay careful study, for the details are charming and often touched with humour.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETABLE AND OTHER PAINTINGS

IN the South Ambulatory is preserved the beautiful fragment known as the Retable. It is generally assumed to have been the original painting above and at the back of the High Altar and must have been placed in position either before or very shortly after the dedication of the Abbey Church in 1269. It is an oblong table of wood some twelve feet long divided into panels. Within the panels are paintings on gilt backgrounds, while the framework is decorated with glass inlays and jewels. It is now sadly mutilated, but it must once have been a superb example of medieval craftsmanship. In the centre panels are the figure of Christ in Majesty holding the universe in His hand with the Virgin and St. John on each side of Him. One of the end panels represents St. Peter and the other, now entirely obliterated, represented St. Paul. Between the figures were charmingly framed miniatures of our Lord's miracles, but only one set of these survives. The painting is so beautiful and delicate that Professor Lethaby has called it " the finest painting of the thirteenth century

which exists—a work of supreme excellence in design, the craftsmanship of which seems to surpass the powers of man."

It is only by an accident that the Retable was preserved. In 1827 Mr. Blore, the Abbey architect, "discovered" it forming the top of one of the waxwork cases. As a matter of fact it had long been known to antiquaries that on a "refuse bit of old board" in this position there was ancient painting, and matters had not been improved by their going and scraping at it with their penknives! But in 1779 a worse disaster was to befall it, for when the wax effigy of Lord Chatham was placed in the case the whole of that part of the Retable which formed the top of this case was deliberately defaced and painted over with black paint to form a suitable setting for the wax figure. From this position it was rescued by Blore, and has ever since been one of the principal treasures of the Abbey.

Almost contemporary with the Retable is the large painting of St. Faith over the altar in the chapel which bears her name. She is represented in a blue tunic with a rose-coloured mantle, and carries in one hand a book and in the other a gridiron. She was probably painted by Master William, the King's Painter, who was also a monk of Westminster. He is probably the little praying figure of a monk which is painted to the side of the picture.

To the south of the high altar are the wooden canopied sedilia, or seats for the clergy, forming part of the supposed tomb of King Sebert. They probably date from about 1308. These stalls have large figures painted on the panels, both towards the altar and on the back towards the ambulatory. They were badly mutilated in 1644, when

some of the figures were deliberately planed off by a carpenter on the ground that they were superstitious pictures. The figures towards the ambulatory represent the Confessor giving his ring to the Pilgrim (now destroyed) and the Annunciation. But the upper parts of both the Virgin and the Angel have been destroyed. The figures towards the Altar are rather a puzzle, but Professor Lethaby thought that they represented Sebert, St. Peter, Ethelbert and Bishop Mellitus. Only the figures of the kings remain. These figures are of great interest and technical excellence.

Just by their side, hanging above the tomb of Anne of Cleves, is the great framed painting of Richard II as a young man—the first known painted portrait of an English king. It is a contemporary work, and represents the king throned, wearing his crown and robes of state and holding the orb and sceptre. It was, perhaps, given to the Abbey by Richard himself.

On the walls of the Chapter House there is an interesting series of paintings which have recently been cleaned and have thereby recovered much of their original colour. Those on the east and adjoining walls represent a Last Judgment and date from the early fourteenth century. They have been mutilated, but the angels which remain are of great beauty. It was evidently originally intended to continue these frescoes all round the Chapter House, for in the heads of the arcades are a series of angels with musical instruments of the same date. But for some reason the scheme was abandoned, and at the end of the century one of the monks, Brother John of Northampton (*d.* 1404), caused the other walls to be painted with scenes

THE CORONATION CHAIR
Sword and Shield of State of Edward III

from the life of St. John. They are interesting, and bear a strong resemblance to a similar series of scenes on the tapestries at Angers, but they are not of the same technical excellence as the earlier paintings. At the foot of the panels were painted figures of animals—" the wyld asse," the " tame asse," " the Kameyl," and others—some of which still remain.

It is well to remember the medieval love of colour. Traces which remain show that much of the interior of the Abbey masonry was outlined in red in a sort of brick-like pattern, with red roses in the middle, and that the sculptured doorways and arcades were brightly coloured and gilt. In certain lights it can be seen that the first arch from the crossing of the North Transept on the east side has been elaborately painted in alternate slabs of dark green and red colouring. The whole effect of all this colour on the tombs and elsewhere, together with the polished marble of the pillars, the painted glass, and the richness of the shrine and its surroundings, must have been vivid and even startling, but the medieval builder was never afraid of a brightly coloured scheme of decoration.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CORONATION CHAIR AND WAX EFFIGIES

THE Coronation Chair is the link which binds the living with the dead, for in it every sovereign of England has been crowned since Edward II in 1327. It was made in 1300 by order of the King, Edward

I, to enclose the Stone of Scone which he had brought from Scotland in 1296. It is of oak, and was once richly painted and set with enamels by Master Walter, the King's Painter, who received £5 (roughly equivalent perhaps to £100 to-day) for his work. Very little of his work remains, and it is only by minute examination that traces of the birds and foliage which formed part of the pattern can be discerned. The carved lions which form the feet are of more recent date, but they are earlier than the Coronation of George IV, when they are usually said to have been made. Beneath the seat is the famous Stone of Scone upon which the early Kings of Scotland were crowned. It has an interesting legendary history which even traces its story back to the time when it served as Jacob's pillow. But it is at least certain that it has been a sacred stone from almost the dawn of history in Scotland. It seems to be akin to stone found in the neighbourhood of Oban, and for many years it was kept at Dunstaffnage Castle near by. Thence it was moved to Scone, where it remained until it was captured by Edward I. Attached to it are two iron rings, perhaps to allow its being carried on a pole, or possibly to enable its being used for ceremonial purposes such as swearing fealty while grasping the ring. Many times did the Scots try to recover the venerable relic, and once at least the Sheriffs of London were ordered to take possession of it in order to restore it. But they were forced to return the answer, "The Abbot of Westminster refuses to give it up." It is curious that no special sanctity seems to have attached to the Chair until recent times. It seems to have been used by the abbot at the high altar, and throughout the seven-

teenth and eighteenth centuries anyone might sit in it who would on payment of a small fee. In consequence the Chair is covered with names—many of them of Westminster boys, one of whom, the late Lord de Ros, has left it on record that he once slept a night in the Chair. Only once has the Chair left the Abbey, on the occasion when Oliver Cromwell was installed as Lord Protector in Westminster Hall. The other Coronation Chair now kept in Henry VII's Chapel has only been used once. It was made for the Coronation of William and Mary, who had an equal claim to the English throne.

Among the more curious objects preserved within the Abbey is the collection of wooden or wax effigies of royal or other great personages. In early times it was the custom to carry the body of a dead king, dressed in his royal robes, uncoffined, upon the bier. No doubt it was felt that it was important to show that the sovereign had actually died. But gradually—perhaps for the first time at the funeral of Henry III—an image dressed to represent the king took the place of the actual corpse. Some of these early effigies have been preserved and are now shown in the Abbey Museum in the Norman Undercroft. From their somewhat dilapidated condition they came to be known as " the Ragged Regiment," and were a popular show as early as the seventeenth century. A seventeenth century doggerel ballad called " The Tombs in Westminster Abbey, as sung by Brother John Popplewell, in the manner of chanting in a Cathedral " refers to them thus :

"And here they stand upright in a press, with their bodies made of wax,
A Globe and a Wand in either hand, and their robes upon their backs."

The earliest of these effigies which can be identified, is a wooden figure of Edward III. It shows traces of colour and of the marks for the attachment of a beard. The next in point of age is also a wooden figure. It is that of a woman, and is painted a bright red. It probably represents Queen Katharine of Valois, the wife of Henry V. Perhaps the most interesting, however, is that of Henry VII, which has an admirably modelled head in plaster and is probably the work of Torrigiani, who made the effigy on Henry's tomb. Others in the collection have been tentatively identified as Anne of Bohemia (a head only), Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII, Queen Mary Tudor, Anne of Denmark, James I and Henry, Prince of Wales.

The later "waxworks" have been kept for many years in the upper part of Abbot Islip's Chantry Chapel within the Abbey. By far the most interesting is the figure of Charles II dressed in his Ga ter Robes. The face has evidently been modelled with great care and is, perhaps, the most interesting portrait of him which exists. It was done when all need for flattery had ceased, and closely resembles a sketch made from life by Sir Peter Lely, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. The rather ghastly figure of Queen Elizabeth was remade in 1760 but is probably based on the original effigy, and there has always been a tradition that the face is the original one. William III and Mary and Queen Anne are more interesting

from their clothes than as portraits. William is placed on a footstool to make him more of a height with his wife. The effigy of the Duchess of Buckingham is dressed in the clothes which she wore at the Coronation of George II. By her side is the effigy she had made of her small son, while in the middle of the chapel is the recumbent wax effigy in his peer's robes of her last surviving son, the last Duke of Buckingham of the Sheffield line. Next the Duchess of Buckingham is the effigy of the Duchess of Richmond, "La Belle Stuart," "as well done in wax as can bee"[1] in the robes she wore at the Coronation of Queen Anne. Her favourite parrot is on a stand by her side, and is probably by far the oldest stuffed bird in the kingdom.

These were the last effigies actually made for funerals, but the vergers and lay vicars of the time felt that the collection must be kept up to date. They, therefore, added in 1779 the rather remarkable effigy of Lord Chatham, which is curiously life-like in its appearance. They were thereby able to raise the fee for "seeing the waxworks" from threepence to sixpence. In 1806 an admirable likeness of Nelson, dressed in clothes which he had actually worn (except the coat) was also added in the hope that visitors would desert St. Paul's and return to the Abbey! Lastly, we must mention the armour of General Monk, which has recently been properly set up. It was formerly the custom for visitors to reward the guide by putting a contribution into Monk's cap—a custom referred to in the Ingoldsby Legends:

"This here's the cap of General Monk! Sir, please put summut in."

[1] According to the directions in her Will.

PART III

THE STORY OF THE MONASTERY

CHAPTER XIV

A MEDIEVAL MONASTERY

THE story of Westminster Abbey would not be complete without some reference to the monastery of which for nearly seven hundred years it was the Abbey Church. The Westminster monks were Benedictines or Black Monks, and from the fourteenth century onwards there were usually between fifty and sixty of them. In earlier days there may have been more. But it is important to realise that the Abbey was built and planned for the use of not more than eighty persons, and for that purpose it was admirably adapted. The monks alone used the Abbey Church, for their services, and the spiritual needs of the population which gathered round the monastery were provided for in the parish church of St. Margaret, in the churchyard.

It must be remembered, too, that a great Benedictine Abbey such as Westminster was an establishment of considerable size. Besides the fifty or sixty monks there were the lay brethren or servants, a large permanent building staff, the secular choir, the schoolmaster and his boys, the brethren of St. Edward and other almsmen, and the

staff of the Home Farm and of the Abbey Mill. There were also attached to the Monastery a doctor (John Leche and William Pill were, appropriately enough, two of the early ones), a lawyer, a barber, a tailor and his assistants, a laundress, a scribe and others. The Abbot and the Prior had separate establishments of considerable size, and in addition there were the bailiffs and other officials connected with the very extensive properties of the Abbey in London and the country. It is perhaps not realised that the Abbey owned all Westminster, Knightsbridge, Kensington, Hyde Park, Paddington, Covent Garden (the Convent Garden), and most of Hampstead, and had manors and estates in practically every county in England. It can readily be imagined that the management of these estates involved an immense amount of work. The life of a Westminster monk was, in fact, an exceedingly busy one, for it was the custom as far as it was possible to give every brother some special job apart from the ordinary routine, and there was little excuse for idleness. It was a hard life, but not an unpleasant one. The monk was not tied too strictly to the cloister, and might at any time be sent to visit one of the outlying Abbey properties by way of relaxation. This, no doubt, was a deviation from the rule of St. Benedict, but under a good Abbot it does not seem to have worked badly at Westminster, and as far as one can tell from the account rolls the business side of the monastery was not inefficient, and the accounts of each officer were kept with great minuteness and carefully audited every year.

The arrangement of the monastic buildings at Westminster followed the usual Benedictine plan. The principal

buildings were grouped round the cloister, which was the centre of the monastic life. The monks lived and worked in the North Cloister, where they faced due south, and had the church between them and the north and the transept to shelter them from the east winds. The cloister has lost its glass, rushes are no longer strewn on the floor, and the little wooden cells or "carrels," each containing a desk and a stool, have disappeared, but even so this cloister is still a sheltered spot even in mid-winter—a fact well known to those who work in offices in Westminster and spend their luncheon intervals there. In summer, with the green of the Cloister Garth and the peaceful plashing of the fountain, it must have been a pleasant enough spot in which to work. In the East Cloister by the doorway into the church can still be seen the place where the monastic bookcase stood. In the middle of this cloister is the Chapter House, whither the monks went daily to transact business, and beyond are the day-stairs from the dormitory, now leading to the Chapter Library. The dormitory was above this cloister, and being thus at right angles to the church, a stairway (now destroyed) enabled the monks to descend under cover into the South Transept for the night services. Beyond the dormitory to the east was the infirmary with its hall and chapel, and the monks' burial ground was round the east end of the Abbey. The Infirmary, also, had a large garden to the south, now known as the College Garden. The South Cloister was a passage way leading to the refectory or frater. The refectory was a large hall parallel to this cloister, the south wall of the cloister

THE CLOISTER GARTH

being the north wall of the refectory. By the entrance doorway at the west end was the washing place. The niches where the monks kept their towels can still be seen. Beyond the refectory to the South were the kitchens and the Prior's House. The novices were taught in the West Cloister, and on the benches near the West Cloister door can still be seen the sets of holes for the games of marbles which they played. Above part of this cloister and extending round a courtyard was the Abbot's House, the Manor of Cheney Gates as it was called. Further off, along the east side of Dean's Yard, were the guest houses and cellarer's buildings (now made into Canons' houses), and after 1461 the School, while in the middle of Dean's Yard was the " Home Farm " with its granary and mill, and still more to the west was the almonry wherein dwelt the almspeople, the lay brethren and the singing boys. The whole monastery was bounded by a high stone wall (part of which remains in Great College Street) and entered by gatehouses which are represented by the modern gateways to Dean's Yard. A stream ran along Great College Street, and in the open fields beyond were the vineyards and orchards.

It may perhaps help us to realise the ordinary life of a monk if we sketch very briefly the life of one who was actually a member of the convent (to give it its proper name) at the close of the fifteenth century. Thomas Browne entered the convent as a novice in 1485–6. The usual practice was to recruit the novices from among the Abbey tenants in London and the country, and our novice was probably the son of a Westminster tenant, for there

is an entry in the records of the Guild of the Assumption in St. Margaret's Parish that in 1506 twenty pence was paid for masses for the soul of "Maister Brown's Mother, monk." In 1485 the Abbot was John Estney and the brethren numbered forty-seven. The great work of rebuilding the nave was nearing completion, and a few years later Henry VII was to build his new chapel. Just outside the monastery gates William Caxton had set up his printing press a few years before, and the Abbey records show that he was prospering and gradually extending his premises. In 1492, as a newly ordained priest, Brother Browne said his first Mass. This was a landmark in a monk's career and was celebrated by certain officers of the monastery sending him gifts of bread and wine which he shared with his brethren in the refectory. On these occasions the rules which governed behaviour during meals were probably relaxed. In earlier days it had been laid down that the brethren were not to make signs to each other and were not to sit with their elbows on the table. Still less were they to sit with their hands on their chins or across their faces, for that was the attitude "of inordinate study." If a brother chose to regale himself with nuts he was to do so quietly and not to crack them to the annoyance of his neighbours. But if, on the other hand, nuts were provided for all they might eat them as they pleased. If a brother was guilty of clumsiness he was to rise and prostrate himself until the President told him to rise.

For some years Brother Browne followed the ordinary routine of service and study. In 1503, however, he was given his first appointment as supervisor of the poor of

Henry VII's Foundation. He evidently did well, for in 1505 he became Infirmarer, and thereby an important officer in the monastery. We have his account roll for 1505–6, from which we learn that he had twenty-six monks under his care during the year, besides the older and more infirm brethren who had their separate rooms round the cloister of the Infirmary, rather like an almshouse. It was the Infirmarer's care to provide the simple remedies, concocted from lily roots, " popye " and other herbs, with which he dosed his patients. White wine was much in request and was (oddly enough) applied externally as a cure for " housemaid's knee," from which the brethren suffered as a result of kneeling on cold stones. He had to provide music to cheer his patients and see that the archery butts were kept in repair. He was always hopeful that the monastic dovecot would swell his receipts. But it was the triumph of hope over experience, for year after year appears the pathetic entry " Receipts from the Dovecot, Nil." Master William, the doctor, had to be paid his annual stipend of 26*s.* 8*d.* p.a., and the cook, the butler, the laundress and the barber had each to have their wages. His cares were not only domestic. The infirmary was run on the proceeds of the Manors of Wandsworth, Battersea and Parham (Sussex) and the infirmarer was responsible for the upkeep of these manors. In 1505 the roof of the chancel at Battersea Church and the barn at Wandsworth had to be repaired, and all this added to his expenditure. Finally one of the monks under his care died, and that meant a payment of 6*s.* 8*d.* to the poor "for the soul of Brother John Waterden."

It was not the custom to allow any monk to remain long in any office, and in 1507–8 Brother Browne became Chamberlain, and as such was responsible for the physical comfort and well-being of the brethren. It was his duty to provide straw for the mattresses, lamps and blankets for the dormitory, and towels, etc., for the weekly shaving. It is pleasant to find that the elder brethren were shaved first because "the razors are sharper and the towels drier" at the beginning. Above all, he had to supply the brethren with their clothing. Every year each of the brethren was supplied with a new black habit and so many shirts, underclothes, thick socks and loose slippers, and all these were carefully entered against a list of the brethren on the back of the Chamberlain's Account Roll.

So we might go on, but enough has been said to show the kind of duties which the monks undertook in addition to the ordinary routine. Brother Browne never rose to the highest offices in the monastery. He died in 1513–4 and was buried in the North Ambulatory, where the indent of his brass remains. Next to it is the grave of Brother Humphrey, who had entered the monastery in the same year as Brother Browne and was perhaps his lifelong friend.

PART IV

THE STORY OF THE PAGEANTRY

CHAPTER XV

CORONATIONS AND OTHER PAGEANTS

THE Abbey has been the scene of such continuous pageantry from the earliest times that it is obviously impossible to do more than indicate here in broad outline the forms which that pageantry has taken, and refer our readers to the fascinating pages of Dean Stanley and other writers[1] for the details of these events.

We have seen that it was due to the burial of Edward the Confessor that the Abbey Church became the burial place of later Kings. It was no less due to the Confessor that " the most continuous succession of events that the Abbey has witnessed " was inaugurated by the Coronation of William the Conqueror within its walls. It was William's deliberate determination to be recognized not as the Conqueror but as the lawful successor and heir of St. Edward, which caused him to receive his crown by the grave of the last of the hereditary Saxon kings on Christmas Day, 1066. A riot marred the proceedings, for the Norman cavalry on guard outside the church mistook the shouts which greeted the " recognition " of the new sovereign for hostile cries, and attacked and set fire to

[1] Stanley's *Memorials of Westminster Abbey* and Mrs. A. Murray Smith's (E. T. Bradley) *Annals* (1895) and *Roll Call of Westminster Abbey* (1902) and other works

the gates leading to the monastic buildings. The terrified congregation rushed from the church and left William alone with the prelates and monks. It was thus "in the solitude of that wintry day, amidst the cries of his new subjects, trampled down by the horses' hoofs of their conquerors," with William himself "for the first time in his life, trembling from head to foot" that the crown was placed upon his head. But in spite of these untoward circumstances, the precedent set on that day was subsequently followed, and every Sovereign save only Edward V has received his crown in Westminster Abbey. This or that detail of the service has been added or omitted, but the essential features—the recognition, the oath, the anointing, the investing, the putting on of the crown and the homage—of the age-long ceremonial have remained practically unaltered. Since the Coronation of Edward II every sovereign has been crowned in the chair which Edward I had caused to be made to enclose the Stone of Scone.

At a modern Coronation the raised "theatre," as it is called, occupies the central space under the lantern between the choir and the presbytery. The Coronation Chair is placed facing the altar, at the top of the steps leading to the presbytery. Behind it are the chairs of state for the homage ceremony. To the right and left in the transepts in gradually rising tiers of seats are the peers and peeresses. No one who has seen a Coronation can ever forget the wonderful blending of colour of the robes and uniforms, the superb processions, and the long and stately ceremonial culminating in the great moment when (to quote the rubric) "the King sitting down in King Edward's Chair, the Archbishop, assisted with other Bishops, shall

come from the Altar; the Dean of Westminster shall bring the Crown, and the Archbishop taking it of him shall reverently put it upon the King's head. At the sight whereof the people, with loud and repeated shouts, shall cry, GOD SAVE THE KING; the Peers and the Kings of Arms shall put on their coronets; and the trumpets shall sound, and by a signal given, the great guns at the Tower shall be shot off."

Yet as Stanley truly remarks, "the Coronations are but as the outward wave of English history. They break over the Abbey, as they break over the country, without leaving any permanent mark." More solemn and perhaps more moving must have been the scene when a great medieval king was laid to rest within the same Abbey Church wherein he had received his earthly crown. Such a scene, for instance, as the Abbey witnessed on the 7th November, 1422, when the chariot, bearing the coffin of Henry V with his effigy clothed in his royal robes lying upon it, was drawn by four horses to the entrance of the church. All about it was "the boast of heraldry." "The Hatchments wer borne onely by capitaynes to the nombre of xij, and rounde about the charet rode ccccc men of armes al in blacke harnes . . . wyth the but of their speres upward . . . on every syde of the charet went ccc persons holdyng long torches and Lordes bearyng baners, banerets and penons." The Sacrist's accounts preserved at the Abbey tell us that a way had been made "for bringing in horses into the Church", and so the chariot was actually driven up the half finished nave and the coffin laid before the high altar "with suche solempne ceremonies, suche mournyng of lordes, such

prayer of pryestes, such lamentynge of commons as never was before that daye sene in the Realme of Englande."

Of one other such medieval pageant we have not only a description but a picture. The mortuary roll of Abbot Islip (*d.* 1532), the last of the great Abbots of Westminster, shows us the scene in front of the high altar with the temporary hearse blazing with lights, which it was customary to erect at the funeral of great persons, and under which the coffin was placed. The picture has the additional interest of being the only known medieval picture which shows with some accuracy the appearance of the inside of the Abbey in the days of the monastery. The funeral is described in great detail in a contemporary document, and was so prolonged that we are hardly surprised to find that in the middle of the ceremony the mourners "departed unto a place over the chapel of the defunct, where was prepared for them spiced bread, suckett, marmylate, spiced plate, and divers sorts of wine plenty."

In later days and throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the funerals of great personages took place usually at night and by torchlight. It must have added greatly to the solemnity of the scene. One who had been present as a Westminster boy and held a taper at the funeral of Joseph Addison, in 1719, remembered seventy years later the deep impression made upon him by the scene. And indeed the Abbey at night is always impressive and of a beauty entrancing. Perhaps it may be permitted to add two personal reminiscences to illustrate our meaning. It chanced that towards midnight on Armistice Night, 1918, the writer of these lines stood alone within the Abbey Church. Without and

around the Abbey there surged tumult and joyous shouting, but within was peace beyond understanding, infinite. An unforgettable experience. And again, two years later, when, also late at night, after a day during which it had been the centre of great emotion, he stood with one other in the now silent and deserted Abbey at the open grave of the Unknown Warrior, and watched the grave-diggers mingle the sacred soil of France with the no less sacred sand of the Isle of Thorney until it gradually filled the resting place of him "unknown by name or rank" whom they had buried "among the Kings because he had done good toward God and toward His House."

. . . . .

We may note, perhaps, some modern services which carry on the tradition of solemn pageantry which has always been associated with the Abbey. The Houses of Parliament no longer attend a service at the Abbey before the opening of their sessions, as they did in the sixteenth century (and later), when Queen Elizabeth was frequently present in person, but for many years it has been the custom for the Lord Chancellor, the Judges and members of the Bar to attend a service in their robes at the beginning of the legal year and afterwards walk in procession to the Palace of Westminster. In 1913 the ancient ceremony of the Installation of the Knights of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath was re-inaugurated—after a lapse of many years. A service was held in King Henry VII's Chapel when in the presence of the Sovereign the forty-six senior Knights Grand Cross in their robes were ceremoniously placed in their respective stalls, above which their banners had been previously suspended. Few who

were present at that service could have foreseen that the prayer used upon that occasion for "those, who are called to serve our Sovereign Lord, King George, by sea or land, at home or abroad" would assume within a few months a significance undreamed of at the time. The series of services in the next few years for those who were fighting or who had fought for "the maintenance of their Sovereign's right and honour," culminating in the Burial of the Unknown Warrior in 1920, bound the whole nation to the Abbey in a peculiar and unforgettable way.

In the years since the war the royal marriages in the Abbey of Princess Patricia of Connaught, the Princess Royal and the Duke of York, happily revived a custom, for which a precedent could be found only in the marriage of Richard II to Anne of Bohemia in 1382, and stressed once more the age-long connection between the Abbey and the Royal House.

. . . . . .

We have traced in the foregoing pages something of the long story of Westminster Abbey, and we have seen how it became a national heritage. To-day, as ever, it lays its spell on all who enter within its walls alike by its associations and by its incomparable beauty, and, as it has been well said, "it is still 'the house of God,' ever sanctified by the solemn beauty of its daily worship, and gathering into its consecrating embrace age after age fresh memorials of high endeavour and self-sacrificing service."

THE END

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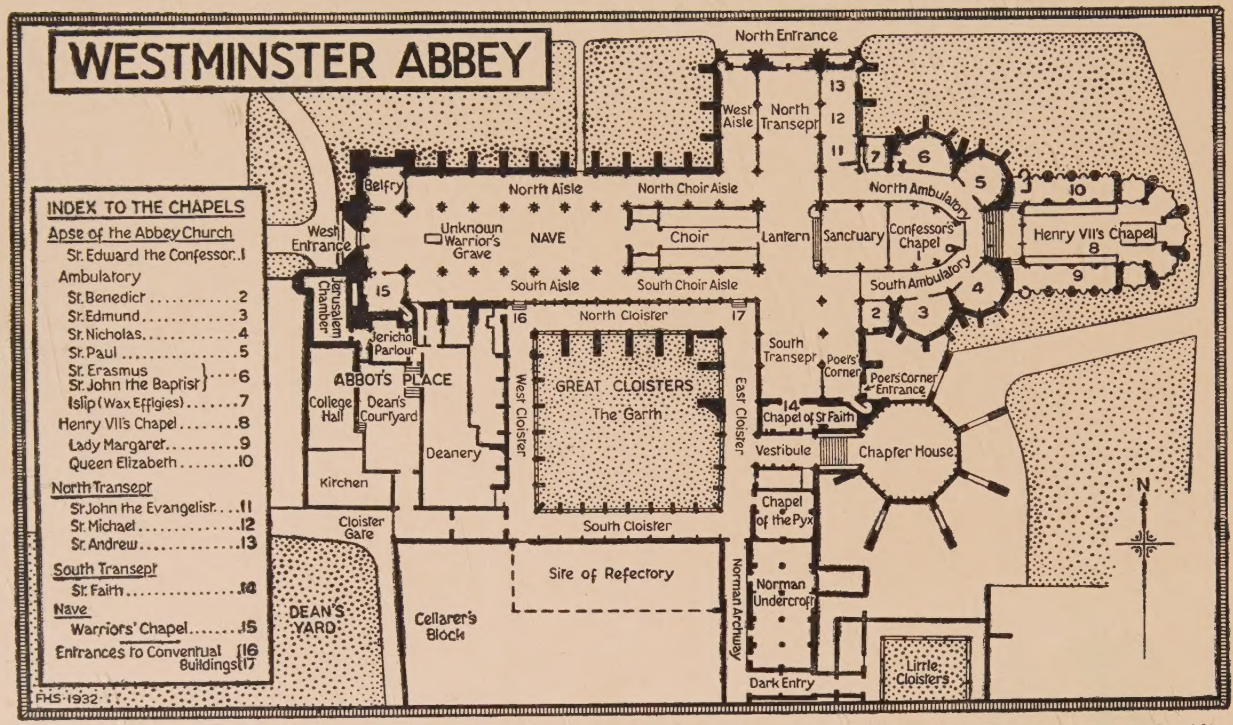

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